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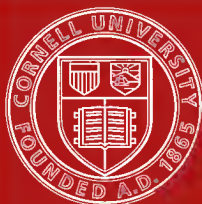
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Talleyrand.



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TALLEYRAND

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
TALLEYRAND (AFTER GÉRARD) <i>Photogravure</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
TALLEYRAND (A PORTRAIT IN EARLY LIFE)	26
MME. DE GENLIS	30
MARIE ANTOINETTE	46
LOUIS XVI.	54
CAMMILLE DESMOULINS	72
MIRABEAU	102
DANTON	122
MME. DE STAËL	132
MME. TALLEYRAND	148
CARNOT	154
BARRAS	168
SIEYÈS	174
NAPOLEON	182
TALLEYRAND (UNDER NAPOLEON)	190
TALLEYRAND (UNDER NAPOLEON)	210
ALEXANDER I.	248
TALLEYRAND (IN MIDDLE AGE)	274
LOUIS XVIII.	292
PRINCE METTERNICH	306
TALLEYRAND (UNDER LOUIS XVIII.)	340
CHARLES X. ,	346
LOUIS PHILIPPE	350
TALLEYRAND (AT LONDON, IN 1831)	358
TALLEYRAND (DANTAN'S CARICATURE-BUST)	364



le marquis de talleyrand

TALLEYRAND

A Biographical Study

By

JOSEPH McCABE

Author of "Peter Abélard," "Saint Augustine," &c.

WITH 25 PORTRAITS

INCLUDING A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

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P R E F A C E

SAINTE-BEUVE, after an attempt that one cannot describe as successful, declared that "it is hardly possible to write the life of M. de Talleyrand." Frédéric Masson noticed the figure of the great diplomatist as he passed with a disdainful "ce Sphinx." Carlyle forgot his dogmatism for a moment, and pronounced Talleyrand "one of the strangest things ever seen or like to be seen, an enigma for future ages." Even a woman of penetration, Mme. de Staël, who had known him well, assures us that he was "the most impenetrable and most inexplicable of men."

There were a few who thought that the long-sealed "Memoirs" of the Prince, which were published only a few years ago, would reveal every secret. They forgot that these were the work of the man who held (improving on Voltaire) that "speech was given to man

PREFACE

to disguise his thoughts"—the man who conducted his exit from the world with all the art he had used at the Congress of Vienna. Yet, if the "Memoirs" have thrown no light, or only a deceptive light, on some of the obscurer passages in Talleyrand's career, they have at least filled in our picture of his personality, so that the tradition of its inscrutability must be surrendered. There has been a prolonged and microscopic research into the age or ages of Talleyrand,—the Old Regime, the Revolution, the Consulate, the Restoration, and the second Revolution. The memoirs of nearly all his contemporaries have seen the light, and official records everywhere have been examined. I have made a careful use of all this research up to date, and find it possible to present a consistent and intelligible personality.

Lady Blennerhassett included the material of the "Memoirs" in the biography of Talleyrand that she wrote ten years ago. But a good deal of light has since been thrown on the earlier part of his career, and in this regard I gratefully avail myself of the investigations of M. de Lacombe. Moreover, Lady Blennerhassett is chiefly occupied with the Prince's diplomatic action. His personality does not stand

PREFACE

out very clearly from her very crowded canvas. That is an inherent disadvantage in writing the life of a great diplomatist. However, in spite of the alluring character of the stretch of history across which the thread of Talleyrand's life passes, I have tried to keep it in its place as a background, and to bring out into the fullest light the elusive figure of the man who made and unmade a dozen oaths of loyalty.

J. M.

LONDON, *June*, 1906.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE TRAINING OF A DIPLOMATIST	I
II.	THE ABBÉ MALGRÉ LUI	16
III.	PRIEST AND BISHOP	38
IV.	AT THE STATES GENERAL	56
V.	THE BREACH WITH THE CHURCH	80
VI.	CITIZEN TALLEYRAND	101
VII.	EXILE	121
VIII.	THE REGENERATED PARIS	141
✓ IX.	ENTER NAPOLEON	165
X.	WAR AND DIPLOMACY	177
XI.	THE RESTORATION OF RELIGION	200
XII.	THE RENEWAL OF WAR	223
XIII.	AWAY FROM NAPOLEON	251
XIV.	THE RESTORATION	281
XV.	A DIPLOMATIC ROMANCE	303
XVI.	THE "FOREIGNERS OF THE INTERIOR"	326
XVII.	THE LAST ACT	349

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This Study is chiefly based on the following Works :

1. Talleyrand's "Mémoires" (edit. de Broglie, 5 volumes); Official Correspondence from London in 1792, during the Directoire, during the Vienna Congress, and from London in 1830-4 (edit. Pallain); Letters to Napoleon, Mme. Adélaïde, D'Hauterive, Choiseul-Gouffier, the Duchess of Courland, Bacourt, Royer-Collard, Guizot, and others; and his separately published Speeches and other Documents.
2. "Procès-verbal Historique des Actes du Clergé;" "Procès-verbal de l'Assemblée Nationale;" "Histoire Parlementaire" (Bouchez et Roux); and the Memoirs or Letters of Arnault, Barante, Carnot, Consalvi, von Gagern, Mme. de Genlis, Guizot, Lauzun, Las Cases, Macdonald, Meneval, Miot de Melito, Morellet, Napoleon, Pasquier, Mme. de Rémusat, Savary, Senfft, and Stapfer.

Of Biographies or Biographical Sketches of Talleyrand the chief are those by Lady Blennerhassett (the first authority on his diplomatic career), Brougham, Castellane, Castille, Lacombe (the best authority on his ecclesiastical career), Sir H. Bulwer Lytton (a very generous but imperfectly informed study), Mignet, Montarlot, and Place et Florens. The following writers are too imaginative or too prejudiced to be of much value: Bastide, Colmache, Marcade, Michaud, Pichot, Sainte-Beuve, Sallé, Stewartson, Touchard-Lafosse, Vars, and Villemarest.

4. Subsidiary information has been derived chiefly from "Aus dem Eheleben eines Bischofs" (anon.); Abt's "Lebensende des F. Talleyrand;" Aulard's "Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française;" Caro's "La Fin du XVIII Siècle;" Crétineau-Joly's "Bonaparte et le Concordat;" Darcy's "L'ambassade de Talleyrand à Londres;" Demaria's "Benevento sotto il Principe Talleyrand;" "Gazier's "Étude sur l'Histoire Religieuse de la Révolution Française;" Goncourt's "Histoire de la Société Française Pendant la Révolution;" Louandre's "La Noblesse Française sous l'ancienne Monarchie;" Mongras' "La fin d'une Société;" Michelet's "Histoire de la Révolution;" Rambaud et Levisse's "Histoire Générale;" Rose's "Life of Napoleon I.;" Sloane's "Life of Napoleon;" Taine's "Les Origines de la France Contemporaine;" Thier's "Révolution," "Consulat," and "Empire."

CHAPTER I

THE TRAINING OF A DIPLOMATIST

THE life-story of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, as I propose to write it, begins when, in his third or fourth year, he falls off a chest of drawers and permanently injures his foot. That wrench of muscles and tendons, making him limp for life, led to a perverse action on the part of his educators that did equal violence to an excellent natural disposition. They say now that the education of a child begins a hundred years before he is born. In the case of Talleyrand you may just as well say a thousand. On his father's side he came of one of the oldest noble families in France, and his mother was a daughter of the Marquis d'Antigny. But these hereditary influences only shape the general contour of his character—give the refinement, the instinct to rise (Talleyrand, or Tailleran—as Napoleon always pronounced it—is said to be from “tailler les rangs”), the “sensibility” and “spirituality” (as people spoke then), the self-possession. When you wish to trace the growth of the peculiar traits of Prince Talleyrand, you find the beginning in that fateful fall and dislocation of the foot.

Talleyrand

The boy was born in 1754, in the Rue Garancière, at Paris.* The week that followed was the only week he ever spent under the same roof with his mother, though she lived for fifty years afterwards, and he never quarrelled with his family. There was no tender rearing, no loving study and direction of the young life in those days. Rousseau had not yet persuaded France that a mother's duty did not end with an impatient and querulous parturition. Talleyrand's father and mother were both in the service of the Court. It was an age when a king could not go to bed without two or three nobles to hand him his night-dress; and when, on the other hand, nobles could not live without sharing the king's purse to the extent of some forty million livres. Estates had been mortgaged and starved; Court life had become ever more luxurious and exacting. The system only held together by a frail structure of privileges, sinecures and commissions, that bound the nobility closer and closer to Versailles and left a yawning gulf between them and the people.

That gulf was not to be seen for thirty years yet, and meantime the life of the idle was swift and

* The date is variously given as February 2nd or 13th, and even March. The first seems to be correct. Dupanloup speaks of the Prince celebrating his eighty-fourth birthday on that date. But the myth-making faculty has been so busy with the life of Talleyrand that his very birthplace and parentage have been disputed. It will prepare the reader for the wild legends we shall encounter to learn at once that serious French writers have attributed Talleyrand's lameness to a congenital defect or to an encounter with a savage sow, and that serious American writers (*Bookman*, September 26, 1901) have asked us to consider gravely a story of his having been born at Mount Desert, Maine, the illegitimate son of an American fisher-girl and a French naval officer

strenuous. In such a life the arrival of children was an accident, a complication. They must at once be put away to nurse, then to school, and finally be placed in the system. Lieutenant-General de Talleyrand-Périgord was better than most of his class, but a busy, and not a wealthy, man. Charles Maurice was immediately put to nurse in the suburbs, and so successfully forgotten that when, in his fourth year, it was decided to remove him, he was found to be lamed for life owing to the unskilful treatment of the injury to his foot. Through the death of his elder brother he should have been entitled to the right of primogeniture—the right to the one good position in the army that could be demanded of the King. But the thought of a Colonel Talleyrand limping along the galleries at Versailles or exhibiting an ill-shaped foot on parade was insufferable. He was destined to the service of the Church. Talleyrand himself pondered at a later date over the long-drawn consequences of his accident. When Royalist agents sought his powerful influence for the restoration of the King, he observed that but for that early mishap he would probably be with them amongst the *émigrés* and royal ambassadors.

At the time it fell out his horizon was bounded by the cabbages and gooseberry bushes of a suburban garden, but in his fourth year he was transferred to a larger sphere. For seventeen days his wondering eyes saw the great world unfold before them, as the coach went from Paris to Bordeaux. A few days

later he was in a stately chateau with a very stately princess caring for him. Little by little he would learn the idea of lordship. The Princess de Chalais was his great-grandmother, the representative of a family that had ruled the district for eight centuries. He saw the homage of her little court, the group of elderly gentlemen who were no longer needed at brilliant Versailles. He saw a broad country-side, where not a steeple or monument could catch his eye but he was told his ancestors had reared it. On Sundays he saw her courtiers carry her prayer-book in the red velvet bag, and he knelt on his chair near her *prie-dieu*, and felt the admiring glances of the peasantry. After mass he saw—he has described it all so tenderly in his memoirs—the sick and needy of the estate trail after them to the chateau, where the old lady sat in her velvet chair in the “dispensary,” and the huge pots of ointment (of which the recipes were kept in the family) were opened, and two Sisters of Charity interrogated the applicants, and the Princess cut up the lint and linen with her own hands, and directed her courtiers to deal out the syrups and ointments. He saw the old regime at its best.

The four years that the boy spent at Chalais had a deep influence for good on him. The Princess loved him: she was almost the only one to awaken his finer feelings in those years of formation, and we shall find them, recalling those kindly days, long after the terrible ordeal that was to follow, in the blood-spattered streets

of Paris and on the reeking battle-fields of Napoleon. As he grew up he must have wondered at times why, through those eight long years he never felt the kiss of a mother or heard the cheering voice of his distinguished father. Then he would learn of Paris and Versailles, and how the splendour of Chalais was only a distant reflection of the life that streamed out from the capital. At last he was to return to Paris, to see his parents, to ask by what path *he* was to enter into that life. He was eight years old, a sharp, observant, sensitive and ambitious boy.

Then the trial began, and the de-formation of his better instincts. While his young mind was nervously tracing its large ambition a family-council was disposing of his body and soul, without a glance at anything but his foot. A valet met him at the coach-office at Paris and took him straight to school. Where were his parents? Where was Versailles? The little lips contracted. He found himself in the dull, stuffy atmosphere of one of the oldest schools in Paris, the Collège d'Harcourt (now the Lycée St. Louis). It lay just off the present Boulevard Michel, its grounds touching those of the Cordeliers. It was a recognised school for children of good families; in fact, his father left him to pay in later years for his own education. At dinner on the first day he sat next to a future ambassador, a nephew of the great Choiseul. He shared the room and tutor of a cousin. But the teachers were poor (except his teacher of philosophy), and were chiefly

expert in the "Almanach de la Cour." In the course of his four years there Talleyrand picked up a fair acquaintance with the subjects taught at the time—French history and letters, logic (greatly esteemed at Paris, and of very obvious influence on his papers afterwards), rhetoric, Latin, philosophy, and a little mathematics. He was industrious and an assiduous reader.

Long afterwards his experience of the Collège d'Harcourt was to lend colour to his denunciation of pre-Revolutionary education. But the poorness of his intellectual training was the smallest sin committed against him in those days. The neglect of his character, his personality, was fatal. An affectionate interest on the part of his parents might have prepared him for the coming disappointment, but it was wholly denied. In his memoirs he speaks with a singular respect of them; at one time he even ventures to suggest that they probably kept away from him lest, in their great love, they should lose the courage to carry out the resolution to commit him to the Church! His father lived until 1788 and his mother until 1809, yet he never spent a week under the same roof with them. On Sundays one of the teachers would take him to dine with them, and after a formal hour or two his father would pat his head and tell him to "be good and obey Monsieur l'Abbé." His finer qualities were irreparably neglected. His school-fellows were good comrades, but the eternal dulness of the place and the restraint of his parents depressed him. It was

not an uncommon experience in this regard. You find much the same complaint about their school-days in the memoirs of most of his contemporaries. The particular difficulty in Talleyrand's case was the absence of any encouraging words about the future. By this time he had begun to think about it. Gradually, he understood hints that it was not the fine halls of Versailles or the adventures of the camp, but the sombre world of the Church, to which he was destined. In his twelfth year, about the end of his college days, he caught the small-pox, and was hurried off to the house of a strange nurse in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Somehow he survived the deadly treatment usual at that time—great fires and hermetically-sealed windows—and escaped marking. But in his convalescence he pondered again on the absence of his mother.

The time had now come for an open statement about his future. It seems probable that he was sent then, in 1766, to visit his uncle, who had just become coadjutor to the Archbishop of Rheims. It is likely enough that his parents would try to seduce him from military ambition by a sight of the archbishop-count's brilliant ecclesiastical court, and Talleyrand affirms in his memoirs that he was taken from the college to Rheims. However, it was probably some time later that he spent a year with his uncle, as he talks of being in his fifteenth year. Mme. de Genlis says that she saw him at Rheims in his "eleventh or twelfth" year, but she

describes him as wearing a soutane, so that she also probably refers to a later date. Whether or no he then visited Rheims, it is clear that in his twelfth or thirteenth year he was sent to Saint Sulpice, and shrank to find himself in the soutane.

It is hardly necessary to recall that this was a common practice in the eighteenth century in France, and in many other times and places. Bossuet and Fénelon had protested religiously against the custom, but it continued to the full, almost without a single complaint, in Talleyrand's day. The effect on the Church itself was disastrous. Scores of younger or illegitimate sons of the nobility were forced into it against their inclination, and they adopted within it the Voltairean scepticism and the looseness of morals which the Army or the Court would have sanctioned. Just at the crisis of its fortunes the Church found at its head such men as the Cardinal de Rohan (the patron of Cagliostro—in exile anent the famous necklace), Loménie de Brienne and Dillon. It had not spoken a syllable of protest when they were presented to it for ordination, for the sole purpose of securing the revenues, and neglecting the duties, of its rich abbeys and bishoprics. Loménie de Brienne, in fact, had deliberately chosen the Church as the best path for his ambition, and resigned the secular primogeniture. During the years of preparation for the Church he was designing the plan of his archi-episcopal chateau and dreaming of the political leadership of the country.

Most of them, like Talleyrand, were put into the Church so as to relieve the strain on the king's coffers at its expense. It had been decided, and was afterwards formally decreed, that no commission in the army should be given to any but a noble, and still the supply was excessive; though the King's personal service cost forty million livres a year, and that of the Queen a further five millions. Then they turned to the Church, with its income of 150,000,000 livres a year, as a field for younger sons. Wealthy bishoprics were appropriated to the nobility, and wealthy abbeys—the income of the Abbot of Saint Germain at Paris was 130,000 a year—were handed over to them as *abbés commendataires*, which might be translated “absentee landlords.”

But I will return presently to the character of the clergy on the eve of the Revolution. Though wealth and prestige and political power were to be had in the clerical profession, the young Talleyrand bitterly resented his situation. By a healthy instinct he felt that, as later experience showed, he was totally unfitted for the Church. Hence he quickly developed a habit of silent and cynical observation, of disregard for authority and conventional ideals, and of unhealthy isolation and self-possession. Many years afterwards an emigrant bishop, who had been a schoolfellow of his at Saint Sulpice, recalled how he used to say to his one or two close friends: “They want to make a priest of me, but they will have an unpleasant time of it.” He himself says that he hardly spoke a word during the first three years

at the seminary. His recreation hours were spent in its splendid library, where he sought especially the lives of statesmen "and moralists," works of travel and adventure, and books that described all kinds of violent movements and upheavals in Nature and the social order. He had not the temperament of a revolutionary; his experience and reading led rather to a complete atrophy of his power of devotion to an idea or an institution. In his theology he would read how the service of religion demanded perfect ministers—"victims without blemish," in the words of the Church; yet his superiors blandly accepted those who were rejected by army or Court. He saw injustice and hypocrisy on every side, and concluded that loyalty and devotion were masks. So, as time went on, he retreated more and more within himself, made his own interest the measure of his acquiescence, and learned the essential qualities of a diplomatist. In later years he saw advantages in the training. It was well to have been thus "dipped in the waters of the Styx." He never spoke or wrote a harsh word of his parents,* or of Saint Sulpice, or of the Church. "Well, God keep his soul, but I like him," said Pius VII of Talleyrand, after his first struggle with Napoleon.

After two or three years at Saint Sulpice he was sent on a long visit to his uncle at Rheims. Archbishop Talleyrand (he was then Archbishop *in partibus*) was a

* Mr. Holland Rose (*Life of Napoleon*) is entirely wrong in speaking of his "resentment against his parents."

conscientious and high-minded prelate, who suffered much in after years from the conduct of his favourite nephew. He tried to reconcile the boy with his profession. The Archbishop of Rheims, the Count de la Roche-Aymon, was a prelate of dignity and intellect, and an imposing figure at archi-episcopal functions. With his episcopal income and the Abbey of Saint-Germain-aux-Près (a total annual income of 180,000 livres), besides private means, he was not one of the wealthiest prelates, but his see was of great importance, and his splendour would have dazzled a youth with any disposition to the clerical career. But the encouragement of the two prelates and all the glory of their functions were quite lost on young Talleyrand. He says in his memoirs that all this prestige did not seem to him "worth the sacrifice of his sincerity." That is obviously an after-thought. It was an instinctive consciousness of his unfitness for the celibate state and for religious ministry that moved him. Madame de Genlis saw him at Sillery with his uncle, and noticed the pale, silent boy, with the observant eyes, in soutane and skull cap. He probably noticed Madame de Genlis in return, if he did not hear something about that charming compound of philosophic virtue and plebeian vice. A few such acquaintances and a few small ecclesiastical dignities were all he ever acquired at Rheims.

He says that his uncle put in his way the lives of Richelieu and Ximenes and Hincmar, and the memoirs of Retz, to show that the ecclesiastical life had

possibilities. He would hardly need assistance in discovering those helpful books. Now that the Church *must* be embraced he formed his own view of it. It should serve as a back-door to the pleasant world from which they would exclude him. He would rejoin young Choiseul and Madame de Genlis by-and-by. It is a rather curious commentary on his training at this time that a shrewed adventuress, who saw a good deal of him under the Directorate, described him as a mixture of Richelieu's firmness, Mazarin's finesse, de Retz's versatility, and a little of de Rohan's gallantry. He may have heard, too, of that questionable ancestor of his in the fourteenth century, the Cardinal Hélié de Périgord, in whose titular Church at Rome an inscription recorded that "he was weak in religion but assiduous in worldly things." Cardinal Hélié, a friend of Petrarch, had become an influential politician, had made a large fortune in commerce, and had spent it pleasantly in the patronage of art and luxury.

These ideas would take shape in time, as he resigned himself to the ecclesiastical condition. In the circumstances such a resignation could only take one form. Month by month the restless youth, with the whole adventurous history of the Périgords in his veins, would contrast the dulness of his surroundings with the dream of his boyhood. Had there been a profound and general religious sentiment in the place, his earlier vision might have been obliterated ; but Voltaireanism was in even the atmosphere of Saint Sulpice. There were good

and sincere priests in the French Church then, as ever, but some of its most prominent representatives were known sceptics, and Hume and Voltaire were read in the seminaries. In through the windows of his prison, too, would come the laughter of Paris, the sound of the bugle, the flash of the passing nobility. A youth devoid of any natural religious disposition, with a horror of ascetic plainness and heavy religious formalism, with a quick, inborn faculty of irony, with a sensuous element just beginning to stir in his blood, and a temperamental craving for woman's society, could never serve the Church. The Church must serve him. He did not discuss his moods with anyone. To most of his companions he was morose and taciturn. To his superiors he was a problem. One of his school-fellows used to tell in later years* how on one occasion he was reading in the refectory, and he came to a passage: "And when the Chateau Tropette." The superior corrected him, and said "Trompette." Talleyrand coolly repeated the passage, and was again corrected. He read it a third time, and quickly ran on before the

*I have already ignored scores of stories about Talleyrand's youth. The biographer has to plunge beneath a mass of them to reach his true subject. A discharged secretary of his, who could imitate his signature, flooded Paris and London with fabricated letters and anecdotes, and he had many rivals in the business. Writers like Bastide, Pichot, Villemarest, Michaud, Stewartson, Touchard-Lafosse, and even Sainte-Beuve, readily admit these, and some of the best biographies contain a few that are inconsistent with known facts. Such are the stories of his chalking Voltairean verses on his uncle's garden wall, and of (in the following year) scaling the walls of Saint Sulpice by night, seducing a whole family, and being imprisoned in the Bastille. The dates or other features betray these apocryphal legends.

superior could speak, "the Chateau Tropette, which the ignorant have hitherto called the Chateau Trompette." We can well imagine that a discreet contempt of authority and disdain of zeal were growing in him.

After a time he found the inevitable (and not unusual) means to enliven the dulness of Saint Sulpice. He was leaving the church one rainy morning when he noticed a pretty girl without an umbrella. He offered a share of his, escorted her home, and they saw each other nearly every day for a long time. They were both rebels. She had been sent on the stage against her wish. This is the only irregularity Talleyrand confesses to at that time, and there is no serious ground for entertaining the wild stories of gambling and liaisons. The soundness of them may be judged from the circumstance that they suppose his father to have died some time before (alleging that an *uncle* shuts him in the Bastille), whereas the father lived for seventeen years afterwards. The seminary authorities were not unwilling to purchase a brighter disposition in their pupil at the price. Talleyrand hints, too, that their liberality had some regard for his connections and prospects.

This episode belongs to his eighteenth year. It is the only authentic detail we have about his life after his stay at Rheims in 1769 until 1774. In that year we find him (in the records consulted by M. de Lacombe) competing for what we should call a fellowship at the Sorbonne. The thesis he sustained there on September 22nd was very edifying and successful. "What science

is most fitted for the lips of the priest?" was the question he undertook to answer, and the published discourse was piously dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. It was his first essay in diplomacy. For priestly ideals he cared not a tittle. But the world seemed to make it a curious condition of success to do this sort of thing, a polite recognition of the particular ante-chamber to public life in which you found yourself. The maxims of Richelieu and De Retz had taken root. The conditions of advancement were repugnant to him, but they were not chosen by him. As a young man of culture in a philosophic age, he could not be expected to take religion seriously. He had read much more of Hume and Locke, of Montaigne and Voltaire, than of Suarez. He became a bachelor of theology, and drew near to the end of his dreary residence in the seminary.

CHAPTER II

THE ABBÉ MALGRÉ LUI

It will hardly be thought that up to this point there is any mystery about the person of Talleyrand. Many types of character were produced by this enforcement of the ecclesiastical profession. A few youths were touched by the better influences of their surroundings, and nobly turned to the great models of Bossuet and Fénelon. A large number drifted impatiently through the seminary, enlivened it with frequent dips into the stream of Parisian life, and emerged as the philosophic abbés and bishops we shall meet presently, ecclesiastical only in title and purse. Many worked silently and steadily through the years of study with a more or less clear political ideal always in mind, using the general education of the priest and the specific training of a systematised theology for their ulterior purposes. Such were Sieyès, Talleyrand, Fouché, Louis, Montesquiou, Daunou, Reinhard, La Besnardière. It might have been predicted at an early stage that Talleyrand would fall in the third class. Then the peculiarly painful circumstances of his exclusion from the more natural career, which he so much desired, would make him independent, self-centred, calculating, lightly cynical.

Add a reasoned disbelief in religious teaching (though it is impossible to say when this began), and we can surely understand Talleyrand in his twentieth year, gravely discussing priestly qualities from the Sorbonne pulpit, while his heart is at Versailles. But we are a long way advanced in the work of interpreting our "Sphinx."

About the close of Talleyrand's course of study at the seminary, Louis XVI was to be crowned at Rheims, and Talleyrand's parents invited him to assist at the ceremony. His father was to have a function in the proceedings, and his uncle would annoint the sovereign if, as was feared, the aged Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon was unable to do so. But this effort of Talleyrand's parents to interest him in his vocation only shows once more how far they were from understanding his character. Looking back on that splendid spectacle of the coronation through the ghastly fires of the Revolution, Talleyrand said that "never did so brilliant a spring presage so stormy an autumn, so dire a winter." No doubt there were statesmen present who tried to look up the darkening avenue, and wondered how the honest young king and his beautiful queen would meet the dangers that were gathering over the impoverished country. To Sub-Deacon Talleyrand* the spectacle must have held another element of tragedy. At the

* Lady Blennerhassett and most biographers wrongly describe him as a priest. He was not ordained until four years later. The archives of the Sorbonne, in registering his application in April and June, 1775, speak of him as a sub-deacon.

time it probably only afforded him a tantalising vision of the gay world from which they would exclude him. Such prestige as the priest had, with his golden cope and sacramental oil and theatrical asceticism, was the last kind he would think of seeking. No doubt he was aware that it was an age of compromise. He would see archbishops (such as Dillon and De Brienne), and bishops and abbés without number, who had their *belles amies* and boxes at the opera. The sight of them made the Church less intolerable. He made their acquaintance, was introduced to some of the great ladies of Paris—the Duchess de Luynes, the Duchess de Fitz-James, the Viscountess de Laval, and others. His conversation seems to have shown already some of the sparkle which made it so much sought later. He pleased. Some of the most fashionable salons were open to him, as soon as the Church should provide him with an income.

The income was on its way. The story usually runs that Talleyrand was one day in the salon of Mme. du Barry with a lively group of young nobles. She noticed his silence, and asked what he was thinking of. "Alas! madame," he is reported to have said, "I was thinking how much easier it is to get an *amie* than an *abbaye* at Paris." The story concludes that he was at once rewarded with the abbey of St. Denis, at Rheims, with a revenue of 18,000 livres.* As a fact, Talleyrand

* On the strength of this absurd story historians like Professor Sloane inform their readers that Talleyrand "was a friend of the infamous

did not see the inside of Versailles until two or three years after the death of Louis XV, and the disappearance of Mme. du Barry. He did not become *abbé* until more than a year later, and was not ordained priest until much later still. M. de Lacombe has patiently traced his early movements in the ecclesiastical records at Rheims and Paris, and we are able to set aside most of the legends of his precocious gaiety. However, he had already begun to climb the ladder of ecclesiastical preferment. In January he had been made (while yet in minor orders) chaplain of the lady-chapel in the parish church at Rheims. He then received the sub-deaconate, and immediately after the coronation he was chosen by the clergy of Rheims to represent them at the General Assembly of the clergy. This was a singular distinction for one of his age, barely in sacred orders (though one other sub-deacon figures in the list of deputies), and it compels us to suppose that he had won some attention. A General Assembly of the Clergy met at Paris, as a rule, every five years, to discuss the more important affairs of the French Church. Each ecclesiastical province sent four delegates, two of the order of prelates and two of the lower clergy, and they sat from four to six months, discussing their financial and political relation to the State, as well as questions of discipline and religion.

Mme. du Barry, and owed his promotion to her." So the legendary Talleyrand still lingers in serious literature. The story contains a gross anachronism, and the mere fact of the abbey being at Rheims points at once to the influence of Archbishop Talleyrand having obtained it for his nephew.

For those who would understand the conduct of Talleyrand in later years, especially his "betrayal" of the Church, it is necessary to see these scenes of his earlier clerical days as he saw them. In the seminary he had learned the stately Catholic ideal of the priest, but had noted with even keener eye how ready the Church was to compromise with it. At Rheims he had seen clearly enough the relations of prelates and duchesses, the price by which the Church retained its prestige in a Voltairean world. At Paris the comedy—rapidly dissolving into tragedy—would continue. In the convent of the Grands-Augustins the thirty-two prelates, in rich surplices, sit in their thirty-two fauteuils; behind each prelate sits, on a "chair with a back," the corresponding delegate of the lower clergy in black mantle and square bonnet. The first great question is: How much is the King going to ask of us? For years jurists and politicians, and latterly philosophers, had murmured at the exemption of the clergy from taxation. The Church had only retained its privilege by paying a few millions at each assembly in the form of a "gratuitous gift." But the amount of the gift was fixed by the King, and it would fare ill with the clergy if they refused it. In the increasing financial distress the "gifts" grew larger and more frequent. At this particular Assembly in July, 1775, the King's messengers announce that he asks sixteen millions* of his devoted clergy. Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, the

* I speak throughout the work of livres (= francs) unless I state otherwise. It is not true that, as is often said, the sum was invariable.

president, informs them that they lay the sum at his feet—reminding him, however, of his promise at the last Assembly to moderate his demands—and the messengers withdraw.

Then the founts of clerical rhetoric are opened. Talleyrand observes in his memoirs that “the intervention of conscience in these money matters gave the speeches a kind of eloquence that is peculiarly at the command of the clergy.” The Archbishop of Auch (with 120,000 a year from his bishopric alone) is deputed to express the common feeling. They are personally most eager to help their country, but the resources they control belong to the service of God and the altar. Is not the King confusing their goods with the monies of “profane commerce”? They sink under “immense burdens,” and are “exhausted” with gratuitous gifts. [The Church has an income of 150,000,000 livres a year.] Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon (with one religious sinecure alone worth 130,000 a year) nods acquiescence. Archbishop Dillon (160,000 a year and odd sinecures), Archbishop de Brienne (only 90,000 as yet—he is not yet Prime Minister), Archbishop de la Rochefoucauld (100,000), and the other prelates agree. Hardly a delegate but is *abbé commendataire* of some place or other. The abbacy of St. Bernard’s historic monastery, where the monks once ate the leaves of the forest, is worth 400,000 a year. The Benedictines of Saint-Maur (1,672 in number) have a revenue of 8,000,000 livres. Cardinal Prince de

Rohan has a total income of 2,500,000 a year, and is heavily in debt. So is Dillon, who spends six months of each year in hunting, and a great deal of the rest in less healthy occupation. However, they will contrive to find sixteen millions this time—and trust the King will return it in other ways. The Abbé de Périgord,* pale, silent, in black mantle and square bonnet, observes it all, and makes (internally) reflections on venerable institutions and “zeal.”

In the course of the sittings several other questions came on that were not without irony. Chief amongst these were the decay of the monastic orders and the growth of infidelity and Protestantism. Some of the most powerful prelates in the Assembly, as well as many deputies of the second order, were Voltairean in opinion and less than Voltairean in practice. All joined in the appeals to King and Pope to reform or suppress the corrupt and decaying monastic bodies, to stem the flood of philosophic literature, and to arrest the growth of Protestantism. They were honest at least in their attack on monasticism. It was one of the ideas of the philosophers, and was rapidly spreading amongst the people. Hardly a day passed now without an attack on them, and Talleyrand says that not a pen was lifted in their defence during the twenty years preceding the Revolution. At the States-General in

* Talleyrand signs the minutes (from which I take my account) under this name, but he is described in the scrutiny of titles as a sub-deacon. The title *abbé* was then given, not only to priests and *abbés commendataires*, but to many teachers and others who never took orders.

1789 one peasant deputy arrived with instructions to work for the suppression of pheasants, rabbits, and monks. Besides the usual struggle to disavow the feudal obligations, which the Court lawyers were constantly trying to fix on the clergy, the other matters discussed were mainly disciplinary.

Such was Talleyrand's initiation to the inner life of the Church. Those who regret that, when he found himself forced even involuntarily into the ecclesiastical career, he did not endeavour to take a religious and self-sacrificing view of it, will do well to ponder these spectacles. Talleyrand's course was natural. He used the influence of the president, who had a strong liking for him, to enter the gayer group of prelates. Dillon and de Brienne opened a few more of the Parisian salons to him. In the course of the sittings he had been made "promoteur" (a kind of sub-secretary, usually given a fair gratuity at the close), and was appointed to an unimportant committee on the voting counters and a very important one on religion and jurisdiction. He claims that he won some distinction in this Assembly, and was already marked for the high position of Agent-General of the Clergy. In September (1775—or eighteen months after Mme. du Barry has quitted the scene) we find a notice in the *Gazette* that he has been appointed *abbé commendataire* of the abbey of St. Denis at Rheims, which brought him an income of 18,000 livres a year. The diplomatic career thus began. The Pope confirmed the election of the

sub-deacon *abbé*, and the prior took possession in Talleyrand's name in December. As Chamfort put it, the ecclesiastical bachelor naturally looked to a wedding with some rich abbey to pay his debts. Bishops, Pope, and King acquiesced in the system without a murmur. All the bishops had sinecures of the sort, and the Court contrived to keep a few vacant at times and pocket the revenues. Talleyrand had not voluntarily entered the ecclesiastical world, and he was determined to make it serve his own ideal as far as possible. But one of his first acts was to pay off the debt his parents still owed to the Collège d'Harcourt.

Before going to Rheims he had applied for admission into the Society of the Sorbonne and been accepted (after formal proof of his moral and intellectual qualities). He took up residence there after the close of the Assembly. With his abbatial income (more than £700 a year) and the prospect of scraps of political and administrative work, he could have at once begun an independent residence in Paris. But that would have left him in the ambiguous position of a cleric and celibate, cut off from the higher clerical distinctions and possibilities. He must now complete his ecclesiastical education in the usual way, and proceed by way of the Agency-General (to come in 1780) to the episcopate.

However, the Sorbonne had not an intimidating repute for austerity. The Abbé Morellet, who had lived there with Turgot and de Brienne, describes in his memoirs the condition of the Sorbonne, and the details

of what we may call its "fellowships," in the eighteenth century. Its library supplied him with Locke, Bayle, and Clarke, as well as with Bellarmine and Aquinas. He read Voltaire, and associated with Diderot and d'Alembert. Theological studies of the old type were pretty well out of fashion. His companions were very generally imbued with the ideas of the philosophers. This relaxation of the older discipline continued down to the Revolution, and Talleyrand did not find residence there irksome. He stayed there two years, wrote the customary theses, and took a licentiate in theology on March 2nd, 1778. He never tried for the doctorate. But we may well believe that, as he says, he was "taken up with quite other things than theology." The success of 1775 had stimulated him, and he spent many an hour in the darkened chapel before the tomb of Richelieu. He hints, too, that pleasure was his chief preoccupation, though this is limited by a later statement that he was unable to look up young Choiseul and find secular friends until he had left the Sorbonne. About the beginning of 1778 he completed his theological training and plunged in the gaieties of Parisian life.*

So much has been written on the social life of the wealthy and noble classes in France on the eve of the Revolution, that I need say little more than that the Abbé de Périgord, as he was now commonly styled, was found in every brilliant salon and circle at Paris during

* Michaud tells that he first attended lectures on constitutional law at Strassburg for a few months. Talleyrand does not mention this.

the next ten years. "You do not know what it is to live," he would say indulgently to the new generation in their restored gaiety after 1815. In some few respects the pace of life had been moderated since the days of Louis XIV, but in others it had increased. There were no longer Pompadours and Du Barrys at Versailles, but the King's propriety was less noticeable than his vulgarity*—courtiers telling daily of his prodigious breakfasts and dinners and indigestions, his antics when they were putting him to bed, and so on—and was quite undone by his weakness. The cynical memoirs of Lauzun show how little change there was in the character of the Court. The imprudence and frivolity of the beautiful young Queen, leaving Versailles to mix with the masked crowd at the Opera when the King had gone to bed (and being locked out by her tactless consort at six in the morning), or gambling heavily with her ladies until day-break, or giving far too substantial ground for charges of gallantry, encouraged the rising generation of nobles in their giddy dance in the crater of a rumbling volcano. She was largely responsible for the passion for heavy gambling that broke out. At Marly her ladies had to change their dresses after playing—soiled with the masses of gold wrung from an almost bankrupt country. A vulgar American adventurer could get the *entrée* of Versailles by letting it be known that he had a large sum of money to lose ; he

"Shall we ever teach him to be polite?" sighed one noble to Maurepas, after a lesson from the King on his irregularities.



From an engraving.

TALLEYRAND.
(A portrait taken in early life).

[p. 26.

won in a short time 1,500,000 livres from his royal shearers. Another man won 1,800,000 livres in one evening. The thoughtless Count d'Artois, the King's brother, bet the Queen 100,000 livres that he would build a palace in the Bois in six weeks ; he won it—and the 900 men he had employed scattered over Paris with the story. Whoever could invent or import a new sensation was sure of the Queen's support. Racing was introduced from England, and she flew to Sablons to lay bets on the horses of her favourite, the too notorious Lauzun. Then chariot races (some chariots costing ten thousand crowns) varied the programme ; and a society was formed at Paris for the construction of a bull-ring. Grave parliamentary lawyers and financial ministers frowned, and were dismissed.

In dress, furniture and banquets the fashion was equally luxurious and criminal. The age of Henri Quatre took the fancy of the younger nobles, and they tried to revive the splendid costumes of that time, but the King interfered. Whole fortunes were spent on fantastic head-dresses. Ladies drove among the impoverished people and before bankrupt tradesmen with structures two or three feet high on their heads, landscapes, symbolic designs—the American Independence hat, the racing hat, the vaccination hat, and so on. Orders of chivalry were set up by this nobility that was squeezing the blood out of the veins of the peasantry. There was an Order of Perseverance, with statutes by Mme. de Genlis, meetings in a gorgeous tent in

Lauzun's garden, and costumes of white and grey and silver; in this edifying company the initiate had to answer a riddle, reply to a "moral question," make a speech in eulogy of some virtue, and—vow to redress injustice and succour the poor and distressed! Clotho and Lachesis must have smiled for once. There were rival Orders of Patience and Felicity and what not. Then Anglo-mania crept into their idle brains, and long evenings were spent in discussing the excellence of popular representation over tea and bread and butter, and the geometrical gardens were Anglicised at great expense, and Gobelins tapestry gave place to wall-paper. And, in fine, we get a real novelty in the shape of Cagliostro with his toad that had received all the Sacraments, his innocent young girl, and his devils at command. Cardinal-Prince de Rohan, with the two-and-a-half millions a year and heavy debts, with the alb worth 100,000 livres, with the twenty-five *valets de chambre* and fourteen *maitres d'hotel*, had set him up in his palace at Paris; and dashing colonels and elderly countesses and philosophic abbés went to see Beelzebub in the flesh. And the Fourth Estate was coming rapidly to birth.

Into this giddy stream the Abbé de Périgord gladly plunged. He was in his twenty-fourth year, still pale of face, but with the familiar Talleyrand features fully developed: the quiet blue-grey eyes, so very observant, under bushy eye-brows, the nose pointed and slightly turned up, the lower lip protruding a little, a faint smile

hovering about the mouth, and a fine crop of long, wavy hair framing the attractive face. He had taken a small house in the district of Bellechasse (near the Invalides), collected an excellent library of good books in good bindings, and at once renewed his acquaintance with Choiseul, Count Louis de Narbonne, and the Abbé de Périgord. They were collective owners of a stable of racers, and were the nucleus of a group of diners and talkers that nearly every ambitious woman must entertain. Talleyrand soon completed his education. He became a famous whist-player (his chief amusement through life), and added a good deal to his income at the tables.

He had in the Rue Saint-Dominique an interesting and useful neighbour in the Countess de Genlis. After a very romantic career she was then in charge of the children of the Duc de Chartres. In 1779 she had retired from the gaiety (and orgies) of the Palais Royal to train, on the best moral and philosophical principles, the twin daughters of the Duchess. The Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Sepulchre at Bellechasse was a favourite spot for "retreats" amongst the wealthy Parisians, and a house was built in its grounds in which the retired countess could carry out her work. Over its street door—a grilled, very religious-looking door—was written, in gold characters, Addison's excellent saying: "True happiness is of a retired nature and an enemy to pomp and noise." Two of the nuns guarded the door, which was firmly closed at ten every night,

and the key was taken into the convent. Inside, beyond the simple furniture (she had left her seven hundred pounds' worth of mirrors in her salon at the Palais), all was calmly educative. Busts of great and good men, maps, historical tablets, &c., abounded. So Mme. de Genlis in her memoirs. She was just such a neighbour as Talleyrand would appreciate at that time. With the same ever-flowing pen she would write a most edifying book on moral education, a Jacobin speech for the Duke, and an erotic novel. Her moral writings testified, as E. de Goncourt says, to "the ease with which her imagination could find a substitute for experience." All Paris descended on the model teacher's dwelling in the Rue Saint-Dominique. There being a royal princess (the infant) in the house men could enter the enclosure; and, says Talleyrand, in one of his caustic moments, she "always yielded at once so as to avoid the scandal of coquetry." Heavy gambling went on under the Addisonian maxim. One youth lost 13,000 louis there. Talleyrand was a very frequent visitor, and an assiduous observer. "When you see much of men," said his cynical friend, Chamfort, "your heart must break or bronze." Talleyrand was not afflicted with a tender heart. His own house at Bellechasse soon became the centre of a brilliant circle of talkers. Though he rarely went to bed before three or four he was up early, and was joined by his friends over a cup of chocolate. He had a peculiarity in the heart-beat, to which he attributed his power of dispensing with



From an engraving, after a picture by Retsch.

MADAME DE GENLIS.

[p. 30.

sleep. He ate little—a cup of chocolate or a biscuit and glass of Madeira during the day, and a choice dinner in the evening. But his wine, his coffee, and his cook were carefully chosen, his toilet elaborately neat. One of the most cultured groups in the city used to gather at his house in the morning. Choiseul was the best of the group, and it is gratifying to find Talleyrand speaking of him in the later days with real affection. He was an animated talker and a good scholar, but he departed presently for the Embassy at Constantinople. Few of the others are spared in the terrible memoirs. He might have said with Chamfort, if he had deigned to borrow a phrase: “I have friends who love me, friends who don’t care a pin about me, and friends who detest me.” But their daily talks were one of the events of Parisian life. Most of them were, or became, Academicians. There was the boisterous young colonel, Count Louis de Narbonne, the third of the trinity, a hard military student, but jovial in company beyond the limit of taste. There was Colonel Lauzun (later Duc de Biron), who had begun his gallant adventures at seventeen, and contracted a debt of a million and a half by his thirty-fourth year; who often shot with the King, and boasted of the affection of the Queen. Later (when he came out of his third prison) there was young Mirabeau, “the tribune of the people,” with the huge, pock-marked face, and the sonorous denunciation of the social order that persecuted him. Of older men, there were the Abbé Delille, the chief

poet of the time, friend of Voltaire, an *abbé commendataire* (30,000 livres) with "the face of an infant," the pen of a libertine, and the ideas of a philosopher: Chamfort, of the "electric head" (it bristled so with ideas), living now with the widow of Helvétius, pouring out vitriolic doses on humanity in all its aspects, but secretly writing Mirabeau's and Talleyrand's elevated democratic speeches—"How many fools does it take to make a public?" he used to ask: Count Lauraguais, very cultured and a generous patron of science and letters: Panchaud, the Swiss banker, greatly esteemed by Talleyrand, "the only man in France who could make the goose with the golden eggs lay without cutting its guts out," said Mirabeau: Barthez, the doctor-philosopher, editor of the *Encyclopædia*: Ruehière, the young historian of Russia: Dupont de Nemours, the famous young economist.

Conversation would not lack variety or brilliance amongst such a group. Talleyrand's assemblies began to be talked about. He was invited "more or less everywhere," and went. He was already sufficiently detached from the idea of partisanship to find his way about amongst the conflicting salons. The houses of twenty noble dames were the centre for as many parties—of the King, of the Queen, of d'Artois, of the Duc d'Orléans, of Turgot, and Choiseul, and Necker, and de Rohan, and de Brienne, and so on. Talleyrand overlooked their political differences, except for a tactical opposition to Necker, and enjoyed their graceful

friendship and influence. He went to the Palais Royal, where the Duc de Chartres (later d'Orléans, and finally Egalité) was wearing out his useless life—"his vices," says Talleyrand, in one of those phrases that were gaining him respect, or at least neutrality, "his vices knew no bounds but the limit of his imagination and that of those about him." Those about him had not infertile imaginations. Talleyrand was taken by Archbishops Dillon, de Brienne, and Cicé, to the house of Mme. de Montesson (secretly married to the Duc d'Orléans), and was granted a seat in the box reserved for "more or less dissipated clerics" (his own phrase) in the private opera-house where Madame and the Duke and other noble amateurs performed. He found her house "at the furthest limit of decency, but very pleasant." It is the only place at which he speaks of meeting his spiritual leaders. Loménie de Brienne had been proposed to the King for the archbishopric of Paris. "But surely," said Louis, "the archbishop of Paris should be a man who believes in God." It did not seem to matter at Toulouse. He went also to the Hotel de Rohan, where the adventurer, Cagliostro, with the olive complexion and brilliant eyes, was exhibiting the devil to people who did not believe in God. At Mme. de Montesson's he one early day made a feeble joke to the Duchess de Gramont, the sister of Choiseul, and several doors were immediately opened to him. Once a week he took his own brilliant group to dinner at the house of Mme. d'Héricourt. The Swedish

minister instituted another day for them, but the dinner was killed by forcing the talkers to listen to long readings—the craze of the hour. Another house he visited, at Auteuil, was that of the Countess de Boufflers-Rouvrel; and at the house of her next-door neighbour, Mme. Helvétius, he would find Chamfort at home, with the Abbé Sieyès, the later constitution maker, and Cabanis, the materialist.

The only house which he visited with any particular freedom, besides that of his mother and that of Mme. de Genlis, was that of the Countess de Flahaut, at the Louvre. Governor Morris, the American Envoy, affirms that he found Talleyrand helping to give her a foot-bath there one morning. Her son, born in 1785, was pretty generally accredited to Talleyrand, but in an age of myths and scandals exact determination is as difficult as it is superfluous.

He shared the celebrated dinners of Mme. de Reynière, saw the deistic Abbé Delille dine with the Queen at Mme. de Polignac's, and went to "learned and tiresome concerts" at Mme. Lebrun's (the artist), M. d'Albaret's, and the Count de la Rochechouart's.

It must not be supposed that he was merely tolerated in these circles. He was sought and esteemed. It is said that he was generally one of the last to enter a salon, limping slightly, faultlessly dressed in blue coat and white vest and chamois breeches (unless it were advisable to remember the soutane), and there was an appreciable movement towards him. His biting wit

and quick repartee soon forced people to reckon with him. One never knew when his deep, deliberate voice would break in with effect. "I don't know why people don't like me," one man was saying; "I have only done one wrong thing in my life." "When will it be over?" asked Talleyrand. "Sieyès is deep," said another to him. "You mean hollow," he at once replied. A lady once asked him, in a period of difficulty, how his affairs were going. One version has it that she asked how his legs were. "As you see, madame," he suavely answered. The lady squinted. His liberal ideas were, of course, an advantage. "He dresses like a fop, thinks like a deist, and preaches like an angel," said someone; though we have no trace whatever of his ever delivering sermons. But it was the age of the philosophers. Talleyrand disliked the more consistent and more advanced of them, such as Condillac, Hélietius, d'Holbach, and the Abbé Raynal, because they not only destroyed superstition, but "broke the links of the moral and social order"—such as it was. But this was written twenty years afterwards. He was never caught by the charlatanry of Jean-Jacques. He greatly esteemed Voltaire, and took care to be presented to him when he came to Paris and was fêted to death in 1778. The myth-makers of later years describe how he went on his knees for the aged philosopher's blessing.

I will only add, to complete Talleyrand's environment about this time, that he had relations also with

most of the retired statesmen of the day, Maurepas, Malesherbes, Choiseul and Turgot, and with the chief scientific workers, La Place, Condorcet, Lagrange, Monge, &c. Of this I will say more presently. Enough has been said to elucidate the progress of Talleyrand's character up to the time of the Revolution. The work which I have to describe in the next chapter will prevent one from thinking that his time was wholly spent in pleasure or devoted to the task of social advancement. From 1780 onwards he was a most assiduous worker, and must have been an industrious student before that time. But he tasted, at least, every part of the life of Paris in those ten years at Bellechasse. I do not mean that he devoured all that it offered. He was an essentially temperate and refined man. He played for heavy stakes, as most people did ; there were some 4,000 gambling houses at Paris when the Revolution began, to say nothing of salons, from that of the Queen at Marly downwards. But this is the only irregularity he admits ; though, of course, the "Memoirs" are not "Confessions." The Baron de Vars has compiled a work on *Les femmes de Talleyrand*. There is only one on the list, Mme. de Flahaut, besides the pretty actress of Saint-Sulpice and the lady he eventually married, with whom his name is connected by any show of evidence. At the same time it would be absurd to claim for him any prohibitive principles in such matters. He took a mind almost swept of ideals into a world where, one social writer says, you could

count the families that were not stained with incest : where, at all events, almost every man, from princes and cardinals down to butchers and abbés, had a mistress. He was no hypocrite. The Church and the world alike expected too little of him for that.

CHAPTER III

PRIEST AND BISHOP

TALLEYRAND had already spent two years of this kind of life when he was ordained priest. In a biographical inquiry it is only necessary to point out that the priesthood was required for his purpose. Possibly he thought of his parents, as some biographers suggest. However regrettable his life, he was a noble, and must not remain a minor cleric. In any case, he would see that the only entrance to the higher political world, along the path into which he had been forced, was the episcopate. He could not be expected to foresee the upheaval of 1789, which would make possible the rise of such men as Sieyès. In 1780 the General Assembly of the Clergy would meet again, and he had ground to believe that he would be appointed Agent-General. From this important position one usually passed to the episcopate. After such an experience as his had been he would very well leave it to the Church to settle its own credit in the matter.

In September (1779) he asked his uncle, in a letter which is extant, to receive him into the Rheims clergy. The Archbishop of Paris was a conscientious

prelate, where it was still possible to consult conscience. Archbishop Talleyrand (he had succeeded Roche-Aymon in 1777) consented and obtained his transfer from Paris. He, too, was one of the better prelates of the time, but he doubtless thought he could influence his gay nephew. He was transferred on September 17th and ordained deacon. Three months later (December 18th) he was ordained priest in the chapel of the archbishopric.* Choiseul was with him, and made a strong appeal to him to desist. He said it was impossible. All that we shall learn of Talleyrand in the chapters to come justifies us in thinking—nay, compels us to think—that he took the step, not with a cynical levity, but with great reluctance. The qualities of refinement and humanity he never surrendered.

On May 10th, 1780, he was nominated by the clergy of Tours (where he now had a second chaplaincy) Agent-General for the next five years. This was a position of the first political importance in the French Church. The Agent-General was the connecting link between the two powers, secular and ecclesiastical, and by the end of the eighteenth century he needed some competence in diplomacy, as well as a fair administrative faculty for domestic matters, especially of finance. Two were appointed by the various provinces in rotation before each General Assembly, and they held office and

* M. de Lacombe has investigated all the documents at Rheims, and so cleared up the mystery of his ordination—a mystery which had emboldened the myth-makers to say he received the episcopate whilst in minor orders.

guarded the interests of the Church until the next ordinary Assembly. If Talleyrand had, as *promoteur* at the last Assembly, left the chief share of the work to his colleague, the case was very different now. His fellow-agent was the Abbé de Boisgelin, cousin of the Archbishop of Aix, and Vicar-General of that diocese, an indolent, incompetent, and disreputable priest. He shared the fruits and prestige of Talleyrand's labours, but not the work itself. In fact Talleyrand says that a scandal supervened immediately, and made it advisable to keep him in the background.

These General Assemblies did not vary much in their chief features, so that little need be said of that of 1780. Only two deputies (one of each order) were sent from each of the provinces, and the Cardinal-Archbishop of Rouen took the chair. The King now asked thirty millions, and Talleyrand was directed to wait on him at Versailles and say that his faithful clergy, though "exhausted by its gifts," would find the money; he was to add a hint (with an eye to the increasing attacks on the Church's property) that the King would doubtless see the wisdom of not killing the goose. Talleyrand would not lose his opportunity at Versailles. There were the usual indignant discussions of the claim of the Crown lawyers to exact feudal service from the clergy, and violent attacks on Voltaire and the "formidable deluge" of improper literature that was poured over the whole country. The Assembly sat from May to October. Talleyrand was now so secure in his

position that he even claims that this "lent some prestige to his Agency."

Two years later he had to summon the clergy to an Extraordinary Assembly at the Grands-Augustins. The King's letter which he had to submit to his colleagues must have appealed to his diplomatic sense. Louis XVI declared that, though there had been unforeseen losses in connection with the help given to America, he had no actual need to appeal to the country. But the fact was that every class seemed so eager to contribute towards covering these losses, and he could not think of excluding his devoted clergy from a share. He therefore graciously permitted them to assemble in extraordinary session in 1782. Talleyrand was charged to explain to the Assembly why the King had altered his mind, and not kept the solemn promise that he would ask no more money until 1785. The fifteen millions were granted as usual, and the clergy added a million to be applied to the relief of the poor families who had suffered by the war. Talleyrand went further, and pressed one of the prelates to urge the granting permission to re-marry to the Breton women whose husbands had disappeared without any definite proof of death. He says that the prelate saw no advantage to himself in making a motion, and so the matter was not brought before the Assembly. Bad books occupied more attention than ever. A complete edition of Voltaire was being printed at Kehl, and was expected at Paris with the most open rejoicing. The

deputies drew the King's attention to its "monstrous obscenities," and petitioned him to prevent its circulation. Talleyrand had not to sign this petition, but he saw Loménie de Brienne and many another Voltairean pastor do so.

In this Assembly Talleyrand himself made two proposals of an interesting character. The first was that the clergy should buy up the royal lottery, by making the King a "gratuitous gift" every year to cover the profits missed. His colleagues were not sufficiently moved by his eloquent denunciation of public gambling to make the sacrifice. Some of them, who knew the Abbé de Périgord's own habits, may have even smiled. But Talleyrand's aim was good, if not virtuous. He saw that the clergy were rapidly losing ground, and he felt that a sacrifice like this, in such a cause, would do much to redeem their degradation. The memoir to present to the King (and, of course, publish afterwards) "might have been superb," he observes with a chuckle; he would have been very glad to write it. The other proposal he made was to raise the salaries of the lower clergy. On these fell the real work of maintaining religion in the country, yet the *curé* had only 700 livres (less than thirty pounds) a year and his *vicaire* the miserable sum of 350 livres. The episcopate was, like the army commissions, a preserve of the nobles, and a great gulf yawned between the two Orders. I calculate that the 140 bishops of France then drew about 8,000,000 francs

a year from ecclesiastical sources alone ; and as all were nobles, many of them had in addition huge private incomes and some State emoluments. Dillon had 160,000 a year from the Queen's private purse for his amiability. They drove about Paris in gilded coaches, contributed to the opera, had opulent hotels and country palaces and hunting seats, and so on. The starving peasantry were beginning to rebel. At the Assembly of Notables the Archbishop of Aix spoke of tithe as "that voluntary offering from the piety of the faithful" ; "as to which," broke in the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, "there are now 40,000 cases on in the Courts." The lower clergy, too, were forming associations for the betterment of their condition. The prelates heard this with pained surprise, but resisted Talleyrand's motion. His earliest political efforts, as he said afterwards, failed because his proposals were too bold for his colleagues. But there can be no question as to the wisdom of his counsels. No one could at that time have had even the dimmest prevision of the events of 1789-1790—and so we may at once reject Pozzo di Borgo's suggestion (afterwards) that Talleyrand from the first took the side of the weak and poor on subtle calculation—but Talleyrand's view of the situation of the Church was singularly wise and shrewd, and his suggestions were, as we now very clearly see, wholly to its advantage. Nor can we with justice ignore the clear strain of humanity that is seen in the young abbé's proposals in favour of the

Breton widows (whom he had seen in their native home) and the lower clergy. In the latter instance he was even endangering his interest with the prelates.

Talleyrand's labours as Agent-General had the effect that he desired. If the Church would not listen to wise advice it must go its way. For him its work was an instrument, and he used it with success. His various reports on their labours to the Conseil du Roi brought him in contact with his real fellows. Before his Agency was over he had won the notice and esteem of the first minister. But I will conclude this account of his clerical work before tracing his earliest political action. The clergy greatly appreciated his ability. At the Assembly of 1785 he was elected secretary, with the Abbé de Dillon, and one day the president rose, after a speech from Talleyrand, to exhibit him to his colleagues as a model of zeal! The report of their Agency which he and Boisgelin sent in was received with enthusiasm, and described as taking "a distinguished place amongst the reports which adorn our annals." Talleyrand neglected nothing in those early years. His work was sound and thorough, and at the same time presented with a rare literary effect. The mythopæic biographers of a later date*

*I do not know whether it is necessary to point out that, though Talleyrand was one of the most tactful and forbearing of men, he was bound to create numbers of enemies. When he passed on from the clergy and nobility to the Revolution, from the Directorate to Napoleon, from Napoleon to the Restoration, and finally from the Bourbons to the Orleanists, he left a shoal of bitter enemies behind him at each step. His personality, his caustic wit, and his curious experiences, formed an excellent nucleus for legends to gather about. You have to pick your way through hundreds of these to reach the real Talleyrand.

had private knowledge that he was too lazy and too incompetent to write a single letter, and that everything was done for him by his associates. We know that from 1780 onwards he attracted to his help a number of capable men, M. Mannay, Count Bourlier, M. Duvoisin (these three reaching their reward in bishoprics), and especially the young Abbé des Renaudes. He could not have done his work so well single-handed, and, as a fact, he quite early learned from Choiseul the rule to utilise subordinates to the fullest extent. It was good statesmanship. But it is quite clear that he must have worked hard. Thirty years afterwards, long after he has exchanged financial politics for diplomacy, he writes with the pleasure and ease of an expert on the financial questions of 1780-1790. There is no doubt that he thoroughly understood them, and discussed them on equal terms with Panchaud, Foulon, or Dupont de Nemours. And the memoirs themselves show that he could write ; he was often seen to sit writing them until four in the morning. Sainte-Beuve himself admits (p. 44) that Talleyrand could do some "fine writing" when he cared.

The report he submitted in 1785 was to be his last plea for a bishopric. It was the custom to find a benefice as a reward for the Agent-General when his term was over. Talleyrand, therefore, wrote it with great care and with plenty of that flattery which his colleagues appreciated. How he felt when he spoke of "the honour of being associated with the labours of

the first body in the kingdom, the happy necessity of communicating with the chief members of this illustrious body, and of maintaining with them relations which their virtues and their intelligence have made so precious," we can very well imagine. One only wonders if he caught the eye of his friends of the Palais Royal when he referred to the Archbishop-President, Dillon, as a man "to whom all offices have been but fresh occasions to display the nobleness of his character and the vigour of his patriotic genius." Dillon is the prelate who, he tells us elsewhere, spent six months every year in hunting, though he had done some good work. In return the archbishop urgently recommended the ex-agents to the favour of the King and of Mgr. Marbœuf (who held the *feuille des bénéfices*, or list of vacant bishoprics). The assembly then voted, as was usual, a gift of 24,000 livres to each ex-agent, and further sums of 4,000 and 3,000 for having discharged the functions of promoter and secretary. But the recommendation for a bishopric fell very flat, to Talleyrand's extreme annoyance. The most brilliant Agent-General of recent times was made to wait three years for his reward, and saw one bishopric after another fall to others. It is said that the king was resolutely opposed to the consecration of so equivocal a candidate, but we have no real evidence of this. Talleyrand complained, in a letter to young Choiseul, of malice on the part of Marbœuf, but it is possible that the circumstance of Marbœuf being a religious man with some firmness



From an engraving, after the painting by Chappel.

MARIE ANTOINETTE.

[p. 46.]

may afford explanation enough. Talleyrand's name was persistently connected with that of Madame de Flahaut, and at one time with that of the daughter-in-law of Buffon. There was a good deal of joking about the prospect of his consecration. Chamfort and a group of amiable ladies were marked out as ready to accompany him to his seat. It is not impossible that Versailles drew the line—when it felt strong enough.

Another feature of the situation was that he had incurred the hostility of the Queen, and she robbed him of a cardinal's hat in that very year; though the hat might have been very much in the way in 1791. The Countess de Brionne persuaded the King of Sweden to ask the Pope for a hat for the Abbé de Périgord. The Pope, who at that time was friendly with the Protestant prince, agreed, and the matter was nearly arranged when the diamond-necklace affair happened. Mme. de Brionne sided with de Rohan, and Talleyrand followed. The Queen took a small revenge by getting the Austrian Ambassador to protest against another hat being sent to France, and Talleyrand was disappointed. Later, when the archbishopric of Bourges fell vacant, and he was passed over, Talleyrand complained bitterly to his friend Choiseul. It was not until the end of 1788, that he became Bishop of Autun.

In the meantime Talleyrand had opened his political career on other than ecclesiastical questions. I have already said that, whilst he lived at Bellechasse, he visited not only fashionable ladies, savants and artists,

but also some of the great statesmen of the last generation. He met Maurepas, a typical representative of the decaying order, Malesherbes, the great parliamentarian and liberal reformer, and Turgot. As Maurepas and Turgot died in 1781, he must have given serious attention to political matters as soon as, or even before, he left the Sorbonne. With the elder Choiseul in his retirement he would be more closely connected through his intimacy with the nephew. The outbreak of the American war and the departure of a number of young French nobles, had done even more than the prospect of national bankruptcy to arouse political interest. Franklin's house at Passy was besieged by fair enthusiasts, eager to embrace him; his fur cap was copied by every dandy in Paris, and constitutional problems were discussed by young ladies in the intervals of a dance. "The zeal for America is simply sublime," says Michelet; while Alison has opined that "the American war was the great change which blew into a flame the embers of innovation." The philosophical party certainly tried to give it that character. When Lafayette and his nobles returned with an account of the glorious new constitution and democracy, the concrete instance led to a more general discussion, which was boldly, though in a limited extent (for there were no republicans yet to speak of) applied to France. Talleyrand was not carried away in the flood. He did fit out a privateer with his friend Choiseul, begging a few guns from the Ministry of Marine; but he ridiculed the general enthusiasm. The

next fashion was Anglo-mania, and this in turn raised constitutional questions of interest to France.*

It is clear that, from an early stage of his attention to the questions raised in the salons and circles by these episodes, Talleyrand was prepared for popular representation, and was disposed to favour the English model. His manifesto, issued on the eve of the States-General, will show us that he did not wait for the logic of events to make him embrace democracy, but there are earlier indications. During the Assembly of the Notables in 1787 he complained to Choiseul that "Paris was taking its cue from the Assembly instead of an instructed Paris impressing its opinion on the Assembly;" and in the same letter he observed with satisfaction that "the people were going to count for something," and that "the granting of provincial administration [local self-government] and the abolition of privileges would prove a source of great gain." The tragic incompetency of the King and Queen to master the situation of their country impressed him. Mere "goodness of heart" was fatal. "Too great a familiarity in sovereigns," he says in his memoirs, "inspires love rather than respect, and at the first mishap affection goes." It was the opinion of a man in whom (to turn his own words upon himself) "philosophic ideas had replaced sentiments," but it expresses the facts here. The network of noble and ecclesiastical privileges made aristocracy

* It is interesting to note that he met Pitt (with Elliot and Wilberforce) at Rheims in 1783.

impossible in an impoverished country. The choice was between a strong autocrat (whom the gods gave when they willed) and a monarchy limited by an educated democracy. With Montesquieu he leaned to the latter ; the satirical description of France as "an autocracy tempered with lampoons" is attributed to him. With Turgot he felt that the people must be educated up to self-government. He pleaded strongly for more efficient and more comprehensive education. A contemporary gives this as his fad. He travelled in privileged provinces like Brittany, and noted the good result of local administration. He would hardly admit moral feeling in the matter, but as a practical politician he was for gradual and constitutional, but thorough, reform.

But the central question of French politics to every thoughtful man was that of finance. He saw nobles coquetting with democracy who were not prepared to surrender a tithe of those pecuniary privileges which were strangling the actual order. He saw constitutionalists working out their "theory of irregular verbs" without even a moderate grasp of the crucial need. He immediately set himself to master the science of finance and the fiscal disorders of his country. His archiepiscopal friends were well acquainted with the one, and such friends as Panchaud and Dupont de Nemours would help him with both. His first open political expression was a vehement attack on Necker after his assumption of power in 1776. There was a good deal

of *parti pris* in his first attack. He ridiculed the person, the features, the dress, the speech, and everything about Necker, as well as his financial operations. But he did oppose on conviction the tactics of the Genevese banker. He thought them too slow, too timid, too small-minded to rescue France from the precipice. At last he made an opportunity for a constructive effort. The funds of the clergy were interested in the bank founded by Turgot, and when anxiety arose about this in 1784 he forced his position as Agent-General (so he himself says), and drew up a memoir in which he proposed a reconstruction of the bank. The memoir attracted much attention. One elderly banker listened to it almost with tears—at the pretty way in which he put banking common-places, Talleyrand says. A number of experts became acquainted with him—Foulon, Sainte-Foy, Daudé, &c. Presently he was introduced to Calonne, the new Minister of Finance, a man of great ability but fitful and unscrupulous.

Calonne's failure is a matter of general history, but during the three years of his ministry Talleyrand was usefully associated with him. The stormy Mirabeau also appears on the scene, and alternately embraces and quarrels with Talleyrand. His dispatches from Berlin, where he acted as a kind of secret agent, were nearly all edited by Talleyrand before being submitted to the King. He addresses Talleyrand from Berlin as his "dear master," but has a violent quarrel with him, and calls him "a wretched, mean, greedy, intriguing creature,"

when he returns to Paris, on account of some offensive allusion to his mistress. Talleyrand overlooked his violence and vulgarity, and intervened for him when he published one of his spirited attacks on Calonne. But Talleyrand's next important act was to help in preparing a scheme for the redemption of the debt of the clergy. Calonne had thought of parrying the growing demand for the convocation of the States-General by summoning an Assembly of Notables. Talleyrand speaks of his scheme as "a vast plan," but without base, as the Notables had no power whatever to raise the necessary supplies. However, it afforded him an opportunity to do helpful work. The Assembly was to meet on February 22nd (1787), and on the 14th Calonne invited Talleyrand,* Dupont de Nemours, and several others to come to assist him in preparing the papers to be submitted. They found a chaos of material, and none of the work done. They divided the work, Talleyrand undertaking to write the memoir and law on the new grain-proposals. He also helped M. de Saint-Genis to draw up a scheme for the redemption of the debt of the clergy. This was to be part of Calonne's plan of a general land-tax and the abolition of all pecuniary privileges.

Calonne's expedient, as is known, only brought about his own downfall. Talleyrand, in Paris, met these angry notables as they filled the salons during the

* The Cambridge History, in saying Talleyrand was "no expert in administration or finance," forgets his five years' Agency.

Easter recess, and heard their comments on the impertinence of the *subvention territoriale*, by which they, the nobles and clergy, were to be mulcted. Loménie de Brienne fostered the opposition amongst the clergy. Calonne was dismissed, and, after an interval of nonentities, the Archbishop of Toulouse secured the long-coveted honour, chiefly through the influence of the Queen. Talleyrand would expect few favours from de Brienne (of whom he writes in the memoirs with disdain and dislike) and the Queen's party. He felt that the near future would smooth out their intrigue. "The passion of the hour was the curtailment of the royal authority," he says. The King was pitied and the Queen regarded with cold suspicion. The enormous deficit dismayed thoughtful men, whilst frivolous nobles called airily for a declaration of national bankruptcy as a means of salvation they had themselves tried with success. The letters which Talleyrand then wrote to his friend at Constantinople show that his observations in the memoirs faithfully convey the ideas he had at the time. Certain technical improvements in finance would do something, but it was clear that the situation of the nobility and clergy must change. The life-blood of France was being sucked for the support of a parasitic growth. Financial privileges must be curtailed or abolished. Who would cut away the exhausting growth of commissions, sinecures, benefices, and gifts? Clearly, neither the nobles themselves nor the King. The country must be prepared for popular representation on

the English model—as seen through the merciful mists of the Channel. Talleyrand proceeded with interest to the Provincial Assembly at Chalons, to which he was deputed as abbé of St. Denis at Rheims.

The Provincial Assembly was a compromise with the new idea of popular representation. Six members of the clerical order and six of the nobility were pitted against twelve of the Third Estate ; equal representation for the sansculottist twenty millions against the privileged two hundred thousand. And the president was to be chosen from the first two orders. These twenty-five nominated twenty-four other members, and one-fourth of the Assembly was to retire every year. At the elections to replace them everyone who paid ten livres in taxes was entitled to vote. Archbishop Talleyrand presided at Chalons, and must have gratified his nephew and the Third Estate at least by his outspoken denunciation of “greed” and his welcome of the promised reform of taxation. The work of these Assemblies was presently transferred to Versailles, in the opening of the States-General, and it need not be dwelt on. Talleyrand is believed to be the author of two long memoranda, submitted to the Chalons Assembly, on points relating to taxation. He was confirmed in his opinion of the value of these schools of popular training, for we find him urging the reopening of them in the National Assembly in 1789.

But his entry into political life was now properly regulated by his nomination to a bishopric. He had gone to Rheims as Vicar-General to his uncle, when



From an engraving, after a miniature by M. Gratis.

LOUIS XVI.

Mgr. Marbœuf, who is believed to have so long opposed his promotion, was transferred from the See of Autun, and it was offered to Talleyrand. There are legends enough to explain how the King suddenly acquired his conviction of the "piety" of the Abbé de Périgord. The most probable story is that Talleyrand's father, who died in 1788, begged Louis to confer the lingering bishopric on his son. Lieutenant-General Talleyrand had been an attendant on the King in his early years, and was a useful officer and a religious man. He would regard the long delay in finding a benefice for his son as a disgrace to one of the oldest houses in France. At all events, on November 2nd, the King signed the nomination, informing an amused Paris that he was "properly assured as to the good life, the morals, the piety, the competence, and all the other virtuous and commendable qualities of the Abbé de Périgord." Paris remembered that a former Bishop of Autun had been the original of Tartuffe. "Ah, if Molière had only known his successor," said one wag at the time. There were many religious and high-minded prelates amongst the French hierarchy, and they commanded a priesthood of considerable self-sacrifice and devotion. But Talleyrand's opinions and habits would not cause a grave shock to a body that included Cardinal de Rohan, Archbishops Dillon, De Brienne and Cicé, and a considerable body of bishops and abbé's of the type of de Grimaldi, Morellet, Arnaud, Bertrand, Delille, de Bourbon, de Dillon, Raynal, Maury, Sabatier, &c.

CHAPTER IV

AT THE STATES-GENERAL

TALLEYRAND was consecrated in the seminary-chapel at Issy, a house of retreat belonging to Saint-Sulpice, on January 16th, 1788. He had observed, in that age of forms, the form of making a preliminary retreat at Issy. His delighted friends from Paris took care that the "solitude," as the place was called, should not depress him. The ceremony was performed by the Bishop-Count of Noyon, Mgr. de Grimaldi, a Voltairean prelate. There are two legendary versions of Talleyrand's bearing during the service. Renan was told by an aged priest who had been present that he was so scandalised at the jauntiness of the new prelate as to feel compelled to charge himself with disrespectful thoughts at his next confession. Another version affirms that Talleyrand fainted from some emotion or other during the morning. It is more likely that Talleyrand bore himself with perfect propriety and indifference. Liberal nobles and prelates rarely ridiculed religion even in private conversation. "I have always moved in good society," said one at a later date, when asked if he had ever scoffed at sacred things. Talleyrand would regard his share in the ceremony as a regrettable necessity of his political

career. It deceived nobody. In the evening he returned to Paris, and received the pallium (a privilege of the Autun bishopric) from the archbishop.

With the sonorous title of "Bishop of Autun, First Suffragan of the Archbishop of Lyons, Administrator of of the Temporalities and Spiritualities of the said Archbishopric, *sede vacante*, Perpetual President of the States of Burgundy, Count of Sanlien, Baron of Issy-l'Evêque, Lucenay, Grosme, Touillon, &c.," he was now somewhat better equipped for political work. The See of Autun was one of the most ancient in France, though its income was relatively very small—22,000 livres a year. It was, however, regarded as having next claim to the Archbishopric of Lyons, and the King had already bestowed a second abbey (of Celles, with 9,500 livres a year) on Talleyrand, and I find assigned to him in a list published at Paris in 1790, the rich Abbey of Bec. He was able to resume his pleasant ways at Paris, with an income of about 100,000 livres, and the credit of a rising prelate. It is probably to this period that the story of his adventure with the coach builder belongs. Receiving no answer to his applications for payment for the new episcopal carriage, the maker presented himself, hat in hand, at Talleyrand's door when Monseigneur came out. After a few days of this Talleyrand blandly asked him what he wanted. "Oh, you will be paid," he affably replied to the man. "But *when*, Monseigneur?" "Oh, you are very inquisitive," said the prelate with an appearance of astonishment, as he drove away. It was the golden age

of debtors. The King once ventured to tell Archbishop Dillon that he had heard he was greatly in debt. "I will consult my steward and report to your Majesty," said the prelate.

On the other hand Talleyrand found that he must at length resort to actual duplicity to strengthen his position at Autun. The diocese of Mgr. Marbœuf was likely to hear of the new appointment with some misgiving. But already there were rumours of States-General, and it was necessary to secure real influence at Autun. Within a fortnight Talleyrand issued—let us hope he did not write—a letter to his flock, which closed the mouths of the pious grumblers. It was full of Scripture and redolent of a quiet, unmistakeable fervour and simplicity. "God is my witness," it says, in the words of St. Paul, "that I am mindful of you without interruption." He praises the zeal of his clergy, alludes to those unhappy people who "only seek in offices the miserable gratification of their vanity," and urgently asks their prayers for his comfort. It was read to tearful congregations in all the churches of his diocese the next Sunday—Talleyrand being detained in Paris. A few weeks later his useful secretary, the Abbé des Renandes, was offered the Vicar-Generalship by the canons. He would not fail to follow up the effect of the letter he had (probably) written. On January 27th Talleyrand took possession of his cathedral, by representative. Important events were preparing at Paris and Versailles. A great arena for political adventure

was being opened. About the middle of March he was free to follow the impulse of his heart and visit his beloved sheep; he had in his pocket the order to convoke the preliminary assembly of the clergy which was to send him to the States-General at Versailles.

This is really the most unpleasant page in Talleyrand's life. I am glad the writing of it is over. But there is—perhaps unhappily—no mystery about it. He was carrying to logical conclusions the cynical estimate of the ecclesiastical order which his experiences had forced on him.

On Sunday, March 15th, he took solemn possession of his cathedral, and was honoured with a great fête. He took the oath, so often recalled by his enemies afterwards, to defend all the rights and privileges and the property of his church. He remained a month at Autun and captivated everybody. Were there rumours of Voltairean opinions and loose practices? He said his breviary daily in the garden—as anyone could see—attended to every function of his office, presided at the episcopal council, was a model bishop. Meantime his young abbé-assistants from Paris were circulating in the diocese, their conversation always ending with politics. There was open table at the episcopal palace for the poor curés, and the reputation of some of his Lenten dishes flew from parish to parish. The townspeople were badly supplied with fish, and a word to friends at Versailles got the post to stop at Autun and drop a load of fresh fish daily for the public

market. The religious congregations were amiably cultivated, and became zealous for Monseigneur's candidature. Soon there are 209 ecclesiastical electors assembled at Autun, many of them rough, hard-working curés, who distrust this descendant of all the Périgords. Monseigneur is tactful, candid, democratic ; quietly leads their meetings as honorary president. He finds that the only serious rivals are Radical curés, with cries of "Down with the aristocrats in Church and State," and better salaries for the "working clergy." Then he issues his manifesto.

Sainte-Beuve was forced to say after reading it that Talleyrand "showed from the first day that he was one of the most enlightened and most penetrating minds of the time." It met every serious grievance on which his rivals depended, and it was perfectly sincere. Talleyrand was not embittered against his order, like Mirabeau, by his experiences, nor did he lean to democratic principles on the lines of the Duc d'Orléans. He formed a sober and consistent judgment on the social and political situation, and it does no less credit to his humanity than his sagacity. He would claim at the States-General that that body should not be arbitrarily interfered with or prematurely dispersed. He would press for the making of a constitution as its first achievement ; and, for all Carlyle's raillery, this was the first political need of France. In this new constitution the rights of the people must be recognised as well as those of the king. The new political structure must have its

first elements in the parish, and so up through Provincial Assemblies to a permanent States-General. All elections shall be free. The sanctity of private or corporate property shall be respected, but only after claims have been judicially examined and unsound claims rejected; in this he is clearly foreshadowing his attitude towards Church property. The administration of justice shall be simplified and purified; the criminal law reformed, lotteries suppressed, privileges abolished. The press shall be free, and the post shall not be interfered with. Feudal servitude shall be abolished. There shall be a strict inquiry into the financial situation, a reduction of expenditure, and the abolition of pecuniary privileges.

I repeat that this was not a rhetorical and insincere document, written for the purpose of catching votes. There is, in the first place, no rhetoric about it. It is a plain and sober statement of remedies for the national malady. Then, it is quite in accord with the few previous expressions of Talleyrand's mind; and it is a faithful presentment of the measures he proposed or supported unequivocally afterwards at the National Assembly. To appreciate it fully, we must, as Mr. Belloc strongly pleads, beware of reading the ideas of '91 and '92 into '89. Camille Desmoulins said there were not ten Republicans in France at that time. There were demands for reform on every point that Talleyrand takes up. I do not claim originality in the details, but the manifesto, as a whole, is an unanswerable

refutation of those who would see nothing but frivolity, selfishness and cynicism in its author. His experiences had made him almost incapable of a zeal for an abstract ideal of justice, but his sympathy and humanity, as well as his political sagacity, gave a serious strain to his work. He was elected deputy by a large majority, and his address, with a few additions, was adopted by his clergy as their *cahier* or book of instructions to their representative.

But from the moment of his election he ceased to be an ecclesiastic, as far as possible. He left for Paris on Easter Sunday, not waiting to officiate at the services or to follow the retreat of the clergy which was commencing. His parishioners never saw him again; except that, thirteen years afterwards, his carriage broke down at Autun, as he passed through on the way to Lyons, and he is said to have been rather roughly noticed.

The next fortnight was spent in feverish debate at Paris on the forthcoming meeting. At the Thirty Club, where cultured Radicals foregathered, and where Talleyrand and Mirabeau had met the boldest politicians of their class during the last year or two, the interest was deep. Lafayette, Roederer, the Dukes de Luynes and Laroche foucauld, Sabatier, and other Liberals belonged to it, as well as some of Talleyrand's earlier friends. A new salon that he frequented, and that rang with political controversy, was that of Mme. de Staël. Necker's daughter had married the Swedish

Minister in 1786, and she succeeded in drawing Talleyrand into her social circle. In such a circle the dangers and possibilities of the coming meeting were properly appreciated. These men, resolutely bent on anticipating instead of waiting for events, like the bulk of the nobles and the King's party, saw clearly enough that the great question was : Will the voting be by orders separately or in common ? The country had been agitated over the question what proportion of delegates should be allowed to the Third Estate. The King had granted them a representation equal to that of the first two orders together, or 600 members. But the effect of this was inappreciable until the procedure of voting had been settled ; and this had been left undecided. No one, indeed, approached the date with the feeling of solemnity with which we now look back on it through the smoke of the revolutionary fires. But the situation was serious for men who, like Talleyrand, were bent on making the national parliament a reality. If the orders were to vote separately, the machine would produce nothing ; if together, the Third Estate would be supported by the democratic curés and would rule the Assembly.

And were the people prepared for this power ? Talleyrand must have stopped many a time in the gardens of the Palais Royal, now the agora of Paris, and listened to the barrel-oratory before the cafés. Men who had been seen washing their only shirt in the Seine a few months ago are leading crowds. Pamphlets are

poured out by the thousand. The Duc d'Orléans is fanning the flames that break out here and there. Mirabeau is thundering. Sieyès is giving substance to the quips of Chamfort. Grim, gaunt, ragged crowds flood the street at the slightest provocation, sack merchants' houses, and attack the troops. Talleyrand goes to Versailles in thoughtful mood. Popular representation on the English plan, with a second house, is the only hope.

Arnault describes in his *Souvenirs* how he saw Talleyrand at Versailles at that time. He would have us believe that he did not know the bishop, but was struck by this "angel's face through which broke the spirit of a devil." He would have thought it the face of a fast-living officer, but for the cassock and pectoral cross. The portrait given in the *Galerie des États-Généraux*, of Choderlos de Laclos, is of greater value, because it was drawn at the time. It gives the estimate in which he was held by his shrewder contemporaries. Intelligence, it is said, is his distinctive gift. Moderation, tact, and restraint are well cultivated. He is mild to a possible fault. He "yields to circumstances, to reason, and thinks he can make concessions for the sake of peace, without deserting the principles which he has made the ground of his morality and conduct." His future depends on himself. If he is influenced by *esprit de corps* he will do nothing; if he acts independently he may do anything. We are justified in thinking that Talleyrand had made up his mind to act independently,

though he had no dream of leading. He was for a limited monarchy and a second chamber representing culture and wealth.* Beyond this he was for Talleyrand, for France, and for humanity.

On the very eve of the opening of the States-General he received another proof of the foolishness of the order to which he now belonged. A few days before the 4th the leaders of the clergy met at the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld's house at Versailles to discuss the situation. All were agreed, to Talleyrand's disgust, that this was a favourable opportunity for asking the nation to extinguish their debt. One of their number was deputed to introduce the proposal, and for a long time they clung to it. Clearly, one must not sacrifice much for clerical *esprit-de-corps*.

Then the 4th of May arrives. Chaos settles into order at Versailles. Talleyrand notes the petty devices by which royalism mitigates its concession of popular representation. On the previous day the King had received the deputies: first the Clergy and Nobles, then, with less ceremony, the Commons. He notes, too, how the leaders of the Commons are beginning to emphasize the distinction. "Three orders? No: three nations," says Sieyès, constitution-maker for the next ten years. Now they march to the *Salle des menus*, all Paris lining the route or hanging out of the windows. Talleyrand sees the 550 popular deputies greeted with a roar of

* In the Memoirs he gives as the only possible alternative a strict limitation of the franchise and of the conditions of candidates.

applause ; mostly lawyers, with set faces under their "slouch-hats." He sees the plumed and embroidered nobles, "the illustrious obscure," tread daintily between silent hedges of soldiers and people. He marks the same silence as he and his forty colleagues in violet cassock and lace surplice step out, followed, with a convenient band between, by 260 curés. He hears the shouts of *Vive le Roi* in the rear : the Queen is ignored. Even in the intoxication of the spectacle and its symbolism the people discriminate conspicuously. The next day he is interested to hear the King express his pleasure that the privileged "are going to renounce their privileges" and Necker rub in the lesson. And he notices that first innovation in the history of France, when commoners put their hats on before the King has got out of the room. It is the first shot. On the third day the Third Estate finds itself alone in the great hall. The clergy and the nobility are meeting separately, as of old, to verify their papers. The commoners see that this means separate votes and impotence, and the historic battle begins.

History has described the fortunes of the Commons. I must follow Talleyrand into the obscurer meeting-place of the First Estate. The Nobles, pampered and encouraged by the unfortunate Queen, were violently opposed to union with the Commons. The Clergy knew they were fatally divided, being themselves composed of two orders, and their leaders were for a policy of drifting or compromise. Cardinal de la

Rochefoucauld was president, and he contrived to bring the Clergy together for three hours a day for six weeks without doing anything. Some of the curés spoke at once in favour of joining the Commons, but they were silenced by an agreement to verify their papers “provisionally” where they were: the delegates from Paris, and several others, had not yet arrived. The Commons break in on their provisional action the next day by inviting them to come into the large hall—into which their own hall opens—and the struggle begins. The prelates name commissioners to discuss the matter with their colleagues of the other orders. The Commons, after a grumble, assent: the Nobles assent, but practically say their decision is taken. The cardinal suspends sittings, but there is mutiny amongst the curés, who are going to appoint a new president, and he hastily retracts. A week is taken up in “provisional” verification, voting commissioners, being polite to each other (except when a deputation comes from Dauphiné to disown the Archbishop of Vienne as improperly elected), and hair-splitting. On the 13th they send deputies to inform the Commons they have appointed commissioners: the deputies announce on their return that they were “not so well received as they had expected.” Fourteen days more are spent in discussing their *cahiers* (instructions), disputes about titles and costumes, abandonment of privileges (which is carried in general form, but disputed in detail), homage to the King, and indignation that pamphlets are in circulation accusing

them of slowness. On the 27th they are "examining their *cahiers*" when "a numerous deputation" of grim, business-like lawyers from the Third break in, and implore them "in the name of the God of Peace and the interest of the nation" to stop quibbling and join the Commons. The deputies are bowed out, and a discussion follows, which is interrupted by M. Target and his companions once more with the same message. They are assured that the Clergy are going to "occupy themselves seriously" with the matter.

Talleyrand knew (as all his colleagues did) that these men of business had been sitting in the next room day after day in the most painful idleness. They would not open a letter or do a single act that could be construed as an admission that they were a separate body. They were "a meeting of citizens," waiting to be joined by other citizens to do the business of the State. It was now clear that their resolution was unshakeable, and Talleyrand and the moderates cursed Necker very freely. The situation was becoming serious. Citizens from Paris (who had now sent their deputies) keep running down to see how business is proceeding. The curés are getting restless. One of them is interrupted by a Vicar-General, and he says: "Hold your tongue, monsieur." Prelates leap to their feet in horror. Then some of the curés induce a secretary to begin at the bottom of his list when he is calling the names. One of the bishops rushes at him and snatches the list from his hand. That night (the 27th) 60 or 70 curés meet and

decide to press matters. The next day there is a warm debate, when the cardinal produces a letter from the King, who is painfully surprised to hear there is some hitch or other ; the commissioners will meet to-morrow in presence of his keeper of the seals. Another fortnight goes in meetings of commissioners, &c. The Nobles have sent to say they are determined to remain a separate order, and the shifty cardinal has betrayed himself: "Your fathers built and defended our churches: you will be to-day the saviours of your country." They have tried, too, to tempt the Commons into action by inviting them to discuss the pitiful condition of the country ; just what we are waiting for you to come and discuss, reply the Commons. Now (the 10th) Sieyès, the cool, hard-headed ex-theologian, is urging the Commons to "cut the cable." On the 12th a deputation of ten offers a dignified but unmistakeable invitation to the clergy; they get a promise of "serious consideration." The next morning it appears that three curés have joined the Third ; three more go during the discussion : five the next day. On the 17th they hear that the Commons have constituted themselves the National Assembly. On the 19th they put the question of union to a formal vote. The cardinal says that separation is maintained by 135 votes against 127. The archbishops of Vienne and Bordeaux, the leaders of the unionists, cry that the list has been manipulated, and keep their party in the hall ; they turn out to number 149 (against 115). Talleyrand marches out with the separatists, who

are hooted by the great crowd at the door ; the Archbishop of Vienne and his colleagues are carried in triumph. Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and the Archbishop of Paris fly to the King.

The rest of this story of the disruption of the First Order and the consequent recognition of the National Assembly (the Revolution) is well known. Talleyrand was opposed to union. He looked with anxiety to the formation, in a totally uneducated country with a wide franchise, of a single elective chamber. We know now how just his concern was. He and the moderate reformers pressed the King (through M. d'Artois) to dissolve the States-General at whatever cost, and make a fresh appeal on a stricter franchise. He was told that it was too late (and in this the King was probably right), and had then to witness the miserable devices by which the royal party insinuated a power they dare not assert. The halls were closed to prepare for a royal sitting, and the famous oath in the tennis-court was the result. That night (June 20-21st) or the following Talleyrand probably made his last effort to stem the tide of the Revolution. He has told us in the memoirs how he and one or two other Liberal nobles went to Marly by night to see and advise the King.* The King would not see them, and his

* The date is not certain, however. Talleyrand speaks of going to Marly, and of seeing M. d'Artois just before he left France. But the Court had left Marly a week before the emigration began. We must suppose there were several visits, and must fix this one, in which he urged strong measures, by the political circumstances. Such measures

brother told them that their proposals—namely, that the King should disperse the present Assembly and proclaim a fresh election—could not be considered. Talleyrand then said that the Prince could not hold them responsible if in the course of events they felt compelled to throw in their lot with the popular party, and M. d'Artois replied that he could not blame them. Talleyrand thereupon returned to Versailles with a deep resentment of the folly of the King's advisers and a feeling of independence. "Under pain of folly," he writes, "it was time to think of oneself." He, of course, held to his ideal of a limited monarchy, but it was clear that this might have to be attained in spite of the Court party. He proposed to watch the development closely and act as circumstances would direct.

On the Monday the tennis-court was closed—reserved for the Princes to play—and the deputies, after wandering about Versailles in sight of an angry crowd, met in the church of St. Louis. There 151 clerical deputies, with two archbishops at their head, join them amidst the wildest excitement. The royal sitting takes place on the Tuesday. The King promises considerable reforms and then affects authority, and orders them to separate into their respective rooms. Talleyrand saw, on the one hand, the delighted nobles

would certainly not be possible in the middle of July, where M. de Bacourt would put the interview; they would have a plausible value up to June 24th. Talleyrand probably did see d'Artois again later. The fact of the interview and the substance of the conversation were afterwards admitted by the Prince.

crowding about the Queen, in the belief that all danger was over ; and, on the other, the sullen Commons send Brézé to tell the King they will only yield to bayonets, and King Louis abdicate, as he says, "Let them stay" ; and 6,000 people invade the chateau with cries for Necker. The Archbishop of Paris has to fly for his life. Soldiers refuse to fire on the crowd. On the next day (24th) the clergy find the door walled up that leads to the Assembly, and the minority continues its separate sitting, but its members melt away. On the 26th Talleyrand and the Bishop of Orange quietly take seats in the National Assembly ; they are presently followed by the Archbishop of Paris. On the 27th the King enjoins the rest of the Clergy and the Nobles to unite with the National Assembly. Talleyrand sees the crowds frantically cheer the King and Queen, but he knows it is the royal submission, not the royal authority, they are greeting.

It is from this date, and during the next three years, that Talleyrand is especially found enigmatic, and I must trace his course with care, avoiding the temptation to linger over the stirring scenes of the time. Talleyrand's opposition to the union of the three orders is clear enough ; he wanted a second chamber as a check on undisciplined passion. When it became imperative he went into the Assembly to do what good he should find possible. He was becoming seriously concerned for the nation. He knew well the leaders of the democratic party. Desmoulins was living with his friend Mirabeau



CAMILLE DESMOULINS.

at Versailles, and Sieyès was often there. Sieyès ridiculed the English model. Desmoulins was a Republican.

On July 7th Talleyrand spoke for the first time in the Assembly, and made a great impression. The question had been raised whether the deputies should still consider themselves bound by the instructions given them by the electors. Talleyrand, Sieyès and Mirabeau urged the abandonment of these *cahiers*, and carried it by a huge majority. Lytton defends Talleyrand's action, and it is intelligible enough. The chief point of his subtle and rather formal speech is that the new Assembly is deliberative, and that therefore "imperative" instructions would only hamper its usefulness. Meantime the situation outside grows serious. Necker is dismissed, Paris is breaking prisons, troops are gathering thick round the capital and Versailles. Talleyrand marks the ascendancy of the violent Mirabeau. On the 13th the Assembly, receiving an unsatisfactory reply from the King, formally demands the withdrawal of the troops, censures the King's advisers, decrees the consolidation of the national debt, and declares its sitting permanent. After a short adjournment during the night they meet with grave looks at five on the Tuesday morning, and settle down to the work of forming a committee to prepare the constitution.* Deputies and spectators run

* Talleyrand was appointed to the Committee with the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Lally-Tollendal, Clerment-Tonnerre, Mounier, Sieyès, Chapelier, and Bergasse. Three of these were Anglophile like himself, and the work seemed not only vitally necessary but promising. Carlyle sadly failed to appreciate it.

in and out all the morning—the Queen and nobles are mixing with the soldiers in the orangery, the Parisians are arming, the air is thick with plots and rebellion. The Prince de Lambesc gallops past for Paris. Deputies fancy they hear the sound of cannon. At last the heroic nerve of the Assembly fails, and Mirabeau proposes that they send a deputation to the King. Then the Vicomte de Noailles and others from Paris are announced, and walk up the great hall amidst a strained silence. The streets of Paris are red with blood ; the people are storming the Bastille, the symbol of the old order. About midnight they hear that the Bastille has fallen. They separate about two, but reassemble early in the morning, and send deputation after deputation to the distracted monarch, who has been awakened from his sleep to be told there is “a revolution.” As the fifth delegation is going, with a ferocious message from Mirabeau, King Louis is announced, and is received with chilling silence. But he makes a fine speech, and promises everything—to disband the troops, recall Necker, and so on.

A feeling akin to that of intoxication is growing epidemic, but Talleyrand coolly watches the strange scenes with the keen, blue-grey eyes under the bushy eye-brows. He sees these prim lawyers crowding like schoolboys about the King as he returns to the chateau, covered with sweat and dust, and the royal family again on the balcony and the great crowds wild with rejoicing. Then he returns to the hall, and is deputed to set out at

once with ninety-nine other members to inform Paris and allay its panic. Through long lines of drawn and excited faces—Paris has not been to bed for three days and nights—they drive up the Rue Saint Honoré to the sound of trumpets. At the Hotel de Ville they tell their news, and heaven and earth seem to melt in confusion. Lally-Tollendal is crowned with a wreath, but he passes it on to the archbishop, and the sedate prelate is dragged to the window where thousands of Bastille stormers cheer him. Then they march to Notre Dame to sing a Te Deum. Talleyrand sees the archbishop arm-in-arm with the black, ragged Abbé Lefèvre, who has been chief powder-distributor ; and the placid, learned Bailly arm-in-arm with Hullin, the chief Bastille stormer, with four fusiliers as guard of honour. On they go through lanes of patriots—many of them monks and priests—with bloody pikes and axes and scythes, and faces unwashed for a week, and scraps of valuable old armour from the museums over tattered costumes. What a Paris compared with that he had left only three months before.

The following morning the deputies gave an account to the Assembly, and crowned the confusion by proposing to erect a statue of the King on the site of the Bastille. That night M. d'Artois and the Court nobles fled from France. It is probable enough that Talleyrand saw him, though the account in the memoirs is very inaccurate ; he states explicitly that he was invited to fly with the Prince, but refused. In the morning the King

went to Paris—driving between 200,000 silent men with pikes, sabres, scythes, axes, and lances—and renewed his promises. But as the news of the fall of the Bastille spread through the provinces it lit up the same conflagration over the country. About sixty monasteries and nunneries were burned in Talleyrand's diocese. His uncle's chateau was burned down during the night of July 29th. The Assembly appointed a committee to enquire into the disorders whilst it discussed the advisability of prefixing a declaration of the Rights of Man to the new Constitution. Fifty deputies demanded speech on the subject, and the flow of oratory began on August 1st. Meantime addresses and deputations poured in on the Assembly from all parts: thirty-one on July 24th, thirty-eight on the 28th, and so on.

By August 4th the deputies seem to have been wrought to a curious pitch of nervousness by the oratory and the addresses. In the morning a letter from the King is read, from which they learn that their Archbishop of Bordeaux has been made Keeper of the Seals, and the Archbishop of Vienne has been given the *feuille des bénéfices*. There is great rejoicing and acclamation of the King. In the afternoon the Vicomte de Noailles mounts the tribune and proposes that, in "this age of light, when sound philosophy has regained its sway," the nobles shall lay at the feet of the nation every one of their privileges. The Duc d'Aiguillon supports the proposal. A marquis, another viscount,

and a bishop (a colleague quarrelling for priority) follow with the same story. Michelet is unfair when he says the Clergy were the last and the least willing to join. Soon the steps of the tribune are crowded with men eager to renounce age-old privileges, and a scene unique in the history of the world is witnessed. Nobles abdicate their feudal rights, bishops abandon their benefices, the Clergy rise in a body to renounce tithe, starving curés forswear their miserable incomes (without a smile), barons part with their baronies, towns and provinces give up their proudest privileges. Time after time business—if this ought to be called business—is suspended till emotions can subside a little. At two in the morning they conclude with the ordering of a special medal and a *Te Deum*.

We do not distinguish Talleyrand in the crowd of enthusiasts, but he soon appears when it comes to the sober and detailed execution of the promise. On the 6th he proposed to distinguish between feudal rights that could be forthwith extinguished and rights that should be compensated. On the 11th he becomes more prominent. It was understood on the 4th that tithe would be redeemed, but, some of the Clergy haggling a little, the philosophic Marquis Lacoste proposed on the 10th that they abolish it outright, and Chasset made a formal motion to that effect. The Clergy resisted at first, and Sieyès supported them; but on the 11th the Archbishop of Paris declared with great solemnity that the Clergy surrendered its tithe to the nation, and

trusted to its honour for a proper provision for worship and religion. There was a loud outburst of applause, and the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and several bishops rose to support their leader. Then the deep, slow, suave voice of Talleyrand broke through the uproar, and, to the astonishment of all, he drily demanded that it be entered in the minutes that Chasset's motion of the previous day had been passed unanimously. This meant nearly all the difference between an enforced and a voluntary surrender. It was the beginning of Talleyrand's secession from the clerical body. It is usually thought that he wanted to conciliate the Radicals by having the result cast in the form of a victory for them. It is probable enough that this was in his mind, but it is probable too that he distrusted sentimental promises and thought it advisable to have a formal motion passed.

The remainder of August was taken up with the discussion of the form in which the Rights of Man should be declared. Talleyrand intervened once or twice with effect. It was he, supported by Mirabeau, who induced the Assembly to cut out the two Articles relating to religion and morals. He has been censured for this, but his speech is a quite honest plea for a purely secular and political declaration, without any antagonism to religion. Long afterwards we shall find him pleading eloquently for moral instruction and for lessons in religion in the schools. On the 18th he was appointed Secretary, and on the 27th spoke with great

effect in support of a proposed loan. In the long and stormy debates of September on the subject of the royal Veto, in the course of which the distinction of Right and Left became fully pronounced, Talleyrand took no part. The life of the people's Assembly must have jarred on his taste. A hundred deputies at once would spring to their feet and out-bawl each other, only the roar of a Mirabeau or a Maury being heard through the din. Gallery also joined in—encouraging, threatening, whistling and singing. How Talleyrand must have longed for his Upper House—and a seat in it ! Through this chaotic period it was almost useless to have a constructive policy. His one preoccupation was, as Aimée de Coigny afterwards said, to assist in allaying violence and to see that as little blood as possible be shed. His moderate colleagues on the Constitution-Committee resigned, but he and Sieyès were appointed on the new committee, and he continued his effort to frame a constitutional check for the daily increasing violence.

CHAPTER V

THE BREACH WITH THE CHURCH

WHEN, in later years, Talleyrand looked back on the many oaths of allegiance he had successively sworn, he affirmed that he had never deserted any cause until it had abandoned itself. This is most certainly true of his desertion of the Royalist cause. His political ideal essentially and to the end included the element of limited monarchy; and his whole temper and taste would make him reluctant to turn from Versailles to the Paris of the end of 1789. A chaos, of which the issue was quite inconceivable, had succeeded to the older order. But the King and Queen had surrounded themselves with evil councillors from the first, and the throne was tottering. Talleyrand took no part in the long debates on the King's Veto. The fact that the Assembly was discussing it at all meant, as he must have seen clearly, that a greater power than the King now ruled in France. He only can give or withhold an authority who possesses it.

Moreover, the royal party seemed to learn nothing from experience to the end. The King, indeed, was recognizing the permanence of the Revolution to some extent; nor was he without humane consciousness that

it had been merited. With a wistful glance back at the golden days that were gone, he was clumsily learning his part as "Restorer of French Liberty" and loser of French autocracy. But "the Austrian" was far from reconciled, and what was left of the light-headed Court was frenzied with mortification. The debates on the Veto were answered by the military banquet in the Chateau on October 1st, by the huge white cockades at Versailles and black cockades at Paris. In the afternoon of the 5th the sitting of the Assembly is disturbed by whispers of Paris marching on Versailles. Presently the trickling stream of oratory is stopped by the sound of an approaching army, irregular and noisy. A deputation from Paris is announced, and fifteen indescribable females enter. With an implied disdain of constitution-making, they have come for mere vulgar bread. Talleyrand and his colleagues pour out and gaze with bewilderment on one more unique scene in the human drama—five thousand muddy, draggled, hungry, dangerous women of every type and complexion. The rest is familiar. Talleyrand saw the strange army surge and beat and roar about the gates of the Chateau, until the inevitable shot was fired, and the tide poured in and for a moment seemed likely to settle a good deal of the Constitution. Then it was rolled back upon Paris—but taking the King, now sunk to office of "chief baker" with it. Monarchy was over in France. There was no question of deserting it.

But what shall we say of his desertion of the Church, whose rights, privileges and properties he had sworn to defend on that gala-day at Autun seven months ago ? When we go back to his election address, endorsed by the electors as their *cahier* of instructions, we are reminded that Talleyrand hinted long ago that titles to property must be scrutinised. It is almost certain that he was thinking of Church property. However that may be, the country had in October to face an appalling scarcity of bread and money. The loans could not be raised : the silver of the churches had been melted down : patriotic gifts had poured fruitlessly into the insatiable *caisse* : respectable ladies had sent their jewellery and other ladies had offered their earnings : monks had tendered their monasteries. The whole nation had caught the fever of August 4th. But the deficit remained, and very many eyes were turned towards the property of the Church, estimated to be worth 2,100,000,000 livres. The idea of appropriating this to national purposes had been broached in the Assembly early in August, and had been supported by several speakers. In the national emergency the proposal was certain to be voted sooner or later—probably sooner. Talleyrand put his name down for a speech on the subject, and it was delivered on October 10th. In it he urged the nation to assume the ownership of all the Church property in France.

It is impossible to read his speech without feeling that a sincere national interest inspires it. He points

out that, in its distress, the nation has hitherto left one class of property untouched, and that, nevertheless, the clergy are probably expecting some change in their position, now that tithe has been suppressed. The clergy are not proprietors in the ordinary sense of the word. Estates are not so much left *to them*, as left for the performance of certain functions. A nation which has felt justified in dealing with tithe may go on to appropriate estates. In this a great saving can be made without injustice. The actual revenue of the Church is (to strike the average of estimates) 150,000,000. But religion can be fully provided for by the State out of a revenue of 100,000,000, and this may be gradually reduced to 80 or 85 millions. Sinecures will be abolished. Useless religious communities will be dispersed and compensated. At the same time the income of the curé will be raised to 1,200 livres a year and a house ; and the clergy must have the first claim on the national revenue, and be paid in advance. He then shows how the sale of Church property may be made to yield 2,100,000,000 livres, and concludes with an attractive sketch of the expenditure of the profit.

The style of the speech is plain, except in the peroration, but it is solid and convincing. We can well believe that the speaker was interrupted over and over again with loud applause. Here was a financial expert, and a bishop, putting in impressive form the vague dream of so many of them. From the Right, naturally, came a flood of rhetoric. The Abbé Maury bitterly assailed

Talleyrand, while Mirabeau vigorously defended the proposal.* But Talleyrand took no further share in the debate. He wished to speak again on November 2nd, the day the law was passed, but the closure had to be voted, and he was content to publish his speech (which was written, as was customary in the Assembly). The second speech adds little to the first, which had now, by order of the Assembly, been printed and distributed throughout the country. That he strengthened his position with the Radicals need not be stated. The *Moniteur* spoke of him as "the youngest, most intrepid, and most enlightened prelate in the ecclesiastical college." The pamphleteers of the Right denounced him as "the limping devil," "Judas," "the disgrace and scandal of the Clergy, the shame of the nobility, the basest and vilest of gamblers." The last phrase was suggested by the Abbé Maury's declaration that Talleyrand was acting in concert with Jewish speculators. We may remember that, as Castellane points out, Talleyrand's proposal would have the effect of reducing his own income to the most slender proportions. We must admit, too, that the appropriation of Church property was only a matter of time; and we must allow the probability of M. de Lacombe's suggestion that Talleyrand feared the confiscation would be carried with the rough injustice and ignorance now so often exhibited in the Assembly, and

* Maury was not without wit. "Now I will close the abbé in a vicious circle," said Mirabeau one day during one of their usual contests. "What! Are you going to embrace me?" asked Maury.

he resolved to secure a just and rational settlement by his action. When we have admitted all this, there is little reason for us to seek further and dishonourable motives. We shall find him later boldly reminding the Assembly of their engagement to stoop to no injustice in the matter.

Not so leniently can we pass over a letter to his diocese, bearing the date of October 12th, which must have been written while he was preparing his speech. It enjoins the prayers of the Quarant Ore in accordance with the King's instructions, but it is painfully religious. "The religion of Our Lord," it begins, "is the firmest support of thrones, the most solid ground for the prosperity of States. In vain does the pride of man spend itself in brilliant speculations on the alleged force of reason and nature in systems of government that are independent of religion." The work was most probably entrusted to Des Renaudes. Talleyrand's clergy had been somewhat shaken when they heard of his voting for the abolition of tithe. After his speech of October 10th they wrote a strong letter of protest. Talleyrand replied with vague and mild excuses, and they retorted with some warmth; but he took no further notice, and the quarrel was suspended.

Meantime the Assembly had followed the King to Paris, and was meeting temporarily at the Archbishop's palace, now deserted by the emigrant prelate. It would be difficult to imagine the feelings of even the staid Talleyrand after this transfer into the very crater of the

national volcano. A glance at the Minutes of the Assembly shows a kind of panic amongst the Deputies. On October 9th the President was asked to grant 200 passports to members of the Assembly. Disease spread amongst them with appalling effect as the date approached for going to Paris. Even presidents complained of "extinction of the voice" when awkward debates came on; and one needed some voice in an Assembly where three orators would occupy the tribune at once, to the accompaniment of a hundred others and several hundred spectators. It must have been hopelessly bewildering to moderate politicians and refined people like Talleyrand. Moreover, one beacon that had more or less guided him so far was extinguished. He had looked forward to a place in the Ministry. Mirabeau had included him in his scheme of a Ministry, when the patriots got wind of it, and, at the beginning of November, passed a law that no member of the Assembly should accept any office or commission for two years after leaving it. The pay of an ordinary Deputy was 18 francs a day. Calculation was now of little use. Talleyrand must either emigrate, and leave France to the violent and ignorant, or remain an observant member of the Assembly, and cultivate faith and hope.

One better feature of the time was that the powerful Mirabeau was becoming alarmed. When he had whispered to the President of the Assembly on October 5th that "Paris is marching on us," he had

been told that it was "so much the better ; we shall get a Republic all the sooner." Talleyrand and he and other constitutionalists met at the "Society of Friends of the Constitution," the successor of the Breton Club, meeting now in the library of the Jacobin convent in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Its debates were then quiet and orderly, the general public not being admitted. Most of the abler moderates met there—Duport, Barnave, Lameth (the well-known triumvirate—"triumscroundrelate," Mirabeau said later), Sieyès, Chapelier, the Duc d'Aiguillon, &c. Many non-deputies, especially writers, were admitted after the transfer to Paris, and the club became a lively centre of journalism and pamphleteering. Gradually it became infected with the general violence of the time, and Talleyrand and the moderates left it in May to found the more respectable club of the Feuillants, with La Fayette, Bailly, Sieyès, Chamfort, and Marmontel. But Paris was being rapidly denuded of all that appealed to Talleyrand. By the middle of October there were 60,000 émigrés in Switzerland alone. The society that replaced them must have tried Talleyrand's infinite restraint. One of Napoleon's rough marshals said of him that "you could attack him thirty times in the rear (*coups de derrière*) before any indication appeared on his face." He needed that quality most of all in the days of the Revolution.

During the remainder of 1789 he confined himself to practical work and moderation. On November 7th he appeared in the tribune to appeal for the proper

protection of the confiscated estates. Towards the close of the month he was appointed on the bank committee, and he delivered its report on December 4th—a very able, technical discourse on the bank question, directed to be published by the Assembly. In December he helped to carry the abolition of the royal lottery, and in January he still further embittered his former friends of the Right by securing the enfranchisement of the Jews in the south. We have also speeches of his pleading for a uniform standard of weights and measures in the country (of which he afterwards sent a copy to Sir J. R. Miller, who was urging the cause in England), and on registration fees and the coinage of small money.

But his most important achievement about this time was the eloquent defence of the Assembly which he delivered on February 10th. Carlyle's disparagement of that body's labours is a faithful, if not very judicious, reproduction of what the crowds and the pamphleteers were saying. The plague of pamphlets was now at its height. E. de Goncourt says that 6,000 men were engaged in distributing them daily. The Cordeliers district had taken under its august protection any scribblers in its area, because the liberty of the press followed from the liberty of man. As a result the Assembly was constantly attacked, in the "theory-of-irregular-verbs" spirit. It was still too full of "aristocrocs" or "aristocranes": it was a mere talking-shop. "Dames of the market" had been in it themselves, and knew. The Assembly directed its

constitution-committee to inform France what it had done. The committee entrusted the work to Talleyrand, and he gave them a pyrotechnic display which brought on again that "species of intoxication" which was growing familiar to chroniclers. The *Moniteur* reporter (Is there a parallel to this in the history of reporting?) was too overcome with emotion even to remember its chief points; but he excuses himself with the plea that no patriot could have done otherwise. It evoked, he said, "applause without example." But it was read again the next day and published, and then scattered lovingly over France at the expense of the Assembly. It is certainly a fine piece of rhetoric, with some notable phrases. "The King desires to guard his people from the flatterers he has driven away from his throne." "Patience! It is for liberty. You have given so many centuries to despotism!" Talleyrand won a great deal of popularity by the speech. Ten days afterwards he was elected President of the Assembly (for the customary fortnight), in opposition to Sieyès, by 323 votes to 125. He was often cheered in the street, and once Mirabeau and he were called to the window by an admiring crowd during a banquet at the Palais Royal.

His diocese, as we can imagine, did not regard this new kind of distinction with satisfaction. At the beginning of the year he had sent them his greeting, and they had responded. But during the stormy debates of February, on the suppression of the monastic orders and

the civil constitution of the clergy, they looked in vain for the name of their Bishop. Talleyrand took no part in the struggle. He saw the suppression of monasteries decreed on February 13th—and Capuchin monks rush to be shaved as soon as the report came, while others rushed to less respectable establishments without waiting to cast off their habits. He gave no assistance to the religious speakers of April 12-13th who tried to induce the Assembly to make a formal declaration that the Catholic Church was the Church of the nation, and he refused to sign their subsequent protest. Then his clergy reminded him of his office. No doubt, they said, with some irony, he had only abstained in the idea of making a more solemn protest at the head of his clergy. They had signed a protest and forwarded it to him to head the list of signatures and present to the Assembly. He sent a conciliatory reply, pointing out that it was unwise to ask a political body to meddle with religion: the Catholic faith *was* the religion of the nation. His people were divided on the receipt of this letter, but one of his Vicars-General made a vehement attack on him, and the local pamphleteers entertained each other for a time. Talleyrand's policy was really clear enough. He believed that religion was wholly necessary for the people, and had no thought of impairing its action. But he knew that there were grave abuses to be suppressed, and he was content to watch, in the interest of the nation and of justice, while the State took over control of the Church. Twice he intervened with dignity and courage

for justice to the clergy ; once on June 13th, when he reminded the Assembly of its promise to treat the despoiled clergy as the first creditors of the State, and again on September 24th. Dillon afterwards claimed that he and the majority of his colleagues acted "as true gentlemen," but would hardly claim religious motives. Talleyrand could say as much.

His popularity with the Left and the bitterness of the Right were doubled when he said Mass for the last time on July 14th—the famous Mass of the Champ de Mars. Much has been written, in the way of sneers, on that famous ceremony, and Talleyrand's share in it ; much of it is clearly unjust. It must be remembered that the demonstration in the Champ de Mars was not a piece of ritual arbitrarily devised to satisfy the sooty citizens who had taken the Bastille. Before the end of the preceding year this collective demonstration and oath-taking had started in provincial towns. As the months of 1790 advanced Paris was piqued to hear that town after town was solemnly swearing loyalty to King and constitution—or constitution and King—without any lead from itself. In May Lyons sent word that it had conducted a most enthusiastic ceremony of the kind. Paris *must* conclude and crown the series. The anniversary of the taking of the Bastille was divinely appointed for it, and the Champ de Mars provided. The municipality decreed it, and invited delegations from all parts of France. Clearly there were great moral possibilities in such an event. A banner could be raised

there under which all parties could gather, except the extreme Right; and that banner might be—with embroideries and fringes—the banner of constitutionalism. As July 14th drew near everything pointed to the realisation of these hopes. Talleyrand was nominated by the King to preside episcopally at the function. He saw the theatre of the demonstration growing into shape during that marvellous fortnight: saw boys and girls, and university professors and curés, and prostitutes and countesses (among them his old friend, Mme. de Genlis, with a “mahogany barrow,” and a little model of the Bastille at her neck), and butchers and brigands and lawyers, decked with tricolours and cockades,, digging and singing and wheeling barrows. It was a new “species of intoxication,” but most certainly it might mean a rally to a constitutional ideal, burned in by a blazing pageantry.

I believe myself it was with these thoughts that Talleyrand faced his great audience from the high altar on July 14th. Imagine oneself looking out on that living amphitheatre of 300,000 incandescent souls, all, or nearly all, in transfigured earnest, swearing loyalty to King and law and nation; and think what type of man would be like to mock at it. Surely not one who felt, if ever he felt anything, that a serious rally to a national idea was the pressing need of France. The statement that Talleyrand whispered mocking words to Lafayette as he mounted the steps rests on the thinnest of rumours, too eagerly welcomed by Sainte-Beuve. Lafayette does not

confirm it ; he would, in fact, be the last man to whom Talleyrand would say them, if he had them on his lips, for *he* would surely see the symbolic power of the moment. And the supposed letter to Mme. de Flahaut, in which Talleyrand is made to sneer at the ceremony, is not worth considering. For most of Talleyrand's actions during these two years we have to construct ourselves the inner mood. The memoirs are almost silent. In this case it is difficult to believe that Talleyrand missed the real potency of the occasion, and we have no evidence to make us think so. The suspicion arises from a two-fold mistake. It is too readily assumed that Talleyrand had no serious interests, but was ever in the mood of Goethe's Mephistopheles. This is false. His affection began at home, if you will, but his public and political action constantly shows that it did not end there. In the second place, the theological element of the demonstration is taken too literally and too narrowly. The fact that Talleyrand and his deacon and sub-deacon (Louis and des Renaudes) were rationalists is no impediment whatever to their being thoroughly serious. Like many priests before and since they took their service symbolically, and looked to the effect on the audience. The ceremony was religious on quite other grounds from those on which the theologian examines it. I respect his technical objection, but the religion remains.

For my part I cannot conceive a man so sensible as Talleyrand was of the needs of France, and the possibilities of such a ceremony, looking with even

indifference from those altar-steps. Would the fire of their enthusiasm burn on? Would this idea of allegiance to law and an orderly constitution work deeper into them? If so, it were well for France; but even if not, it was worth attempting. It was a great political experiment.

Talleyrand's diocesans would be represented on the benches of provincial delegates, but we do not find them quarrelling with him again until he accepts the civil constitution of the clergy. In the discussions of religious and ecclesiastical affairs that continued through the whole year he took no part, except, as I said, to intervene twice when there seemed danger of injustice to the clergy. On the financial side of the proceedings he spoke several times. In their ignorance of the elements of political economy, the majority wished to treat the confiscated estates as so much wealth actually added to the country's resources, or to dispose of them at a ruinous loss. Talleyrand firmly pointed out the fallacies of their view, and pleaded for a wise and business-like procedure in turning the estates into available money. The flooding of the country with paper-money—"robbery by violence" Mirabeau called it—was a serious addition to the financial confusion of the times. But in spite of Talleyrand's clear and earnest warning, supported by all the financiers, the temptation to issue the paper-currency on the strength of the new estates was too great, and Talleyrand had again to bemoan in private the immature democracy

that had assumed power. He retained his popularity, however, and was mentioned for the Archbishopric of Paris in September. He wrote a curious letter to the *Moniteur* on the 8th of September, disclaiming any ambition for the post, but at the same time replying to the personal charges which the rumour had caused the Right to circulate. He denied that he was addicted to *heavy* gambling, but admitted that he had won 30,000 francs at the Chess Club. With a rather hollow show of penitence, he allowed that he had no excuse to make for his gaming, and said that the State ought to interfere and protect citizens from themselves in the matter.

But the determination of the Constituent Assembly to control the Church and force it into the political unity of the State was gradually nearing its climax, and was to close Talleyrand's clerical career. It is hardly surprising that he did not take part in the debates. The issue was never really doubtful, and on the whole would not displease Talleyrand. His abstinence should be construed in his favour; no one could seriously expect him to stand for the autonomy of the Church. The priest was, in his opinion, a moral functionary (for the masses) or nothing, and his work was part of the nation's life. His experience and his knowledge of history would tell him the danger of leaving the clergy "a State within a State." He would regard with satisfaction the suppression (on the just conditions he had himself laid down) of the monastic orders and the redistribution of income. He would hardly

resent the rearrangement of ecclesiastical divisions, the exclusion of the Pope, and the elective character of the new hierarchy. Certainly he must have foreseen the disturbances that interference in these matters would cause, but that was a concern of the executive. With the Archbishop of Sens (de Brienne), the Bishop of Orleans, the Bishop of Vivrières, three bishops *in partibus*, and 66 curés, he took the oath and accepted the civil constitution of the clergy. Archbishop Dillon and 130 prelates refused to submit—the majority of them doing so, Dillon said, as gentlemen, not as theologians. The distinction is unfortunate, though necessary. They had plunged the country in a civil war which only a strict regard for their theology could have justified.

Talleyrand had no more respect for theology than Dillon (and “most of his colleagues,” to use Dillon’s words), but he professed to regard the new State control as purely disciplinary, and wrote to invite his clergy to follow his example. They sent him a fiery reply, promising him “infamy in this world and eternal reprobation in the next,” and declining to “follow him into the abyss.” After the passing of the civil constitution the municipal authorities of Autun had notified Talleyrand’s chapter of the cessation of their functions, and sealed the door of the chapter-house. They continued to meet, however, in private and discuss the morals of their bishop. In the rearrangement of ecclesiastical areas the authorities had contrived to leave

Autun an episcopal centre, but on January 21st Talleyrand resigned his See. He had, he politely explained, been elected a member of the Department of Paris, and must in future reside constantly in the capital ! Lytton's statement that Talleyrand remained throughout life very sensitive to any reference to his bishopric, and that a lady once greatly disturbed him by dropping the word "lawn," is not to be taken seriously. His friends continued to call him "the bishop" for years after (witness the correspondence in 1792 of Narbonne and Lauzun). There is as little plausibility in the story of the Prince of Condé once asking him "what had become of some precious relative of his who used to be Bishop of Autun." No one not gifted with the skin of an elephant would venture to say such things to Talleyrand. I may add that Talleyrand, under the Directorate, more than once sent help to emigrant members of his old clergy who had censured him.

One more episcopal act must be mentioned before Monseigneur becomes plain Citizen Talleyrand. The administration appointed two new bishops, but had retained sufficient respect for the apostolic succession to require their proper consecration. Several of the rallied prelates refused, and Talleyrand promised to officiate, with the assistance of two of the bishops *in partibus*, Gobel and Mirondot. The latter withdrew at the last moment. Talleyrand saw him, and is said to have worked on his feelings by toying with the handle of a pistol and talking of suicide. The three bishops

and the candidates conducted this ceremony on the following day in a curious environment. The chapel was strongly guarded by soldiers, and a military band supplied the music. Saint-Sulpice sent its master of ceremonies to keep the eye of a ritualist expert on Talleyrand, but was disappointed in its search for an essential flaw. The American envoy, Morris, tells that Talleyrand's dread of violence from the orthodox occasioned a good deal of grief to his friend, Mme. de Flahaut. The night before the ceremony she received an envelope containing his will, and sent in search of him. He did not return to his house that night, and she feared a catastrophe. The truth was that, conceiving an attack to be possible, he had slept away from home, and had directed his will to be sent to her only in case of anything happening.

Lytton, a very careful if not generous judge of Talleyrand's career, looks upon this ordination as one of his "unpardonable" acts. It is one of those acts as to which one's judgment is almost inevitably swayed by one's religious views. Talleyrand explains in his memoirs that he did it to save the Gallican Church from falling into Presbyterianism from sheer lack of bishops. The paragraph is ingenious, but not very convincing. Nearer to the point seems to be an answer he gave in later years, according to a letter of the Duchess de Dino to Dupanloup. When asked to explain some action or other, he answered that it was impossible to explain many things done at the time of

the Revolution ; the disorder was so great that people hardly knew what they were doing. If we could succeed in putting ourselves in the frame of mind of a man who had lived through the bewilderingly rapid changes of 1789 and 1790, we should be in a position to pass moral judgment on him. To do it in the light of our calm standards, in our placid days, is absurd. However, my purpose is only to have Talleyrand understood, and there is in this ordination nothing inconsistent with the ideas and policy he has hitherto followed.

But Rome now found itself obliged to interfere and clip the wings of this dangerous bishop at large. On May 1st the *Moniteur* published the announcement from the Vatican that Talleyrand was suspended, and would incur excommunication if he "did not return to penance within the space of forty days." The romantic biographers say that the only notice Talleyrand took of it was to invite Lauzun to supper to console him, adding that "as he was now denied fire and water they would have to be content with wine and iced foods." Unfortunately, the story had been told before, and Talleyrand did not plagiarise. The censure would not distress him. We can, in fact, imagine that he would close his clerical career with some relief. It had imposed not a little duplicity on him. In justice to him we must remember that he had been forced into the clerical estate, had been unchecked in his irregular ideas and habits, had been promoted from order to order by those who were fully

acquainted with them, and, in fine, found a position like his sanctioned by almost his whole social class. Yet this chapter alone of his career will prevent one from ever calling him "great," except in the qualified sense of a great diplomatist.

CHAPTER VI

CITIZEN TALLEYRAND

TALLEYRAND explains in the Memoirs that, after resigning his bishopric, he "put himself at the disposal of events." "Provided I remained a Frenchman" he says, "I was prepared for anything." The outlook must have been blank and perplexing. His ecclesiastical income was entirely stopped, and he was prevented by the vote of the Assembly from accepting a place in the Ministry, or any paid office under Government, for two years. He had, however, been appointed member of the newly-formed and important Department of Paris on January 18th. He retained this municipal office for eighteen months, and there and on the Assembly did some good work during the course of the year 1791. Sieyès and Mirabeau were elected with him: Danton followed on January 31st. Within six months two events of great importance occurred—the death of Mirabeau and the flight of the King. Each event left the outlook darker for constitutionalists like Talleyrand.

Mirabeau had realised at length that France was travelling *downwards*, and had secretly rallied to the Court. Talleyrand was accused later of having done the same; but he denied it, and there was no solid

proof, as we shall see. It is by no means unlikely that Mirabeau would tell the King of Talleyrand's disposition as a monarchist and constitutionalist. On the extreme left in the Assembly a menacing group was forming, and was gaining favour in Paris and the provinces. It was also dominating the club at the Jacobins and extending its influence over France through the affiliated clubs. Mirabeau roared down the violent suggestions of these Marats and Robespierres for a time, but his constitution was shattered* by excess and work. He died on April 2nd, taking with him, he said, "the doom of monarchy." Talleyrand was with him for a couple of hours before he died, and the interview is generally described as the bequeathing of Mirabeau's plans to him. Lamartine says he left Talleyrand "all his grand views in his grand speech ;" another writer says he left him his idea of an alliance between England and France. Talleyrand read Mirabeau's last words at the Assembly. The notion of a bequeathing and inheriting of views is exaggerated. Talleyrand had been friendly with Mirabeau in the intervals of their numerous quarrels, but he was not likely to be influenced by him—if by anybody. Mirabeau's violence and intemperance imposed restraint on him. Their views largely coincided, and, just as Talleyrand's few and wise proposals in the Assembly had almost always had Mirabeau's support, so, now that Mirabeau

* The legendary suggestion that Talleyrand poisoned him is absolutely frivolous, yet Sainte-Beuve professes to have a "terrible doubt" in the matter.



MIRABEAU.

was gone, Talleyrand seemed to be continuing his views in the Assembly. The idea of drawing towards England had been expressed by him twelve months before, in his letter to Sir J. R. Miller. As Talleyrand was nominated to the place left vacant by Mirabeau on the diplomatic committee he would naturally begin to give greater prominence to this idea.

A week later Talleyrand gave a proof of the moderation and splendid balance of his character. At Paris the priests who would not take the oath according to the new civil constitution of the clergy were being roughly handled by the "patriots." Talleyrand induced the Department to pass a measure for their protection. Six weeks earlier his life had been threatened by these "Nonconformists," as he called them. Now he endangered his popularity in securing for them complete liberty to follow their cult in their own way, in churches specially assigned to them. It is not scholarship, but partisanship, to ignore the traits of character—the unchanging concern for justice, humanity and moderation—which inspire these interventions on behalf of his bitter enemies, and in antagonism to the dominant feeling, and then pronounce Talleyrand a "sphinx." A little later (May 7th) he repeated his plea to the Assembly. He had to report the discussion of the constitution-committee on a decree of the Department of Paris in reference to deserted religious edifices. He upheld the right of the municipality to dispose of these, and went on to plead

again for liberty for the "Nonconformists." "Let us not speak of tolerance," he finely says; "such a domineering expression is an insult, and should no longer be found in the language of a free and enlightened people." The king himself, "the first functionary of the nation," shall be free "like other functionaries" to worship as a Nonconformist if he wishes: only not in his character of State-official. On the other hand, these Nonconformists must drop their ridiculous talk of "schism." A nation cannot be schismatic until it declares itself in rebellion against the Church. He politely invites the Pope to mind his own business. I repeat that there is nothing mysterious about these actions except to men whose personal experience disables them from understanding a passionless moral and intellectual consistency.

The reference to the King reminds us of the other great event of 1791 that prepared the way for the Terror. With religious conscientiousness, but political folly, the King had tried to leave the Tuileries for the purpose of making his Pâques at Saint-Cloud. Lafayette was willing; but the Jacobins saw, in long perspective, a flight over the frontier and an Austrian invasion. There was another fatal conflict of mob and authority, and victory for the mob. On the following day the Department of Paris sent a letter of censure to the King for his impolitic attempt. M. Belloc says the letter has been imputed to Danton, but was really written by Talleyrand. He is quite right, as Talleyrand

says in his letter to the Convention from London (December 12th, 1792), that he "redacted this famous address of the Department," and, in fact, took it himself to the King: not impossibly using the opportunity to gild the pill. But the brain of Louis XVI was not likely to be the only one to remain unintoxicated in such times. Indeed, calm political wisdom, looking back now from placid studies, is at a loss to determine the move he ought to have taken. A royalist plot, an unguarded door, and he was off on the night of June 20th for Metz.* On the evening of the 26th Talleyrand saw the sad return again through the lane of some hundred thousand faces, not now cheering, not frigidly silent, but surly and menacing. For a time the increased danger rallied the constitutionalists. They had left the Jacobin club, and met at the Feuillants, where all that was left of moderation and constitutionalism now gathered. But the ancient homes of the Dominicans (Jacobins) and the Franciscans (Cordeliers) had become furnaces, heating Paris. The party on the extreme Left had found a "new fact" to proceed on. Talleyrand's speech of May 7th had been loudly applauded and placarded† over Paris and the provinces. Evidently the situation was then far from hopeless. But this pardonable madness—unpardonable only in its stupid

* It is assumed by some biographers that Talleyrand was privy to the plot. There is no evidence whatever of this, and I think it quite improbable.

† The reader may usefully be reminded that the fashion had come in at that time of pasting several-page leaflets on the walls.

details and blunders — of the King had wrought terrible mischief. Paris rose, and Lafayette crushed it, and made it a more bitter enemy than ever of constitutionalism, more accessible to the new Dominicans and Franciscans—Danton, Marat, Desmoulins, Pétion, Robespierre, and the rest.

One other day does Talleyrand fill the Salle de Manège with ringing applause before the Constituent Assembly breaks up. We rarely catch sight of him in these long and angry debates that fill whole sessions, when the victory is to the strong-lunged. But nearly on every single occasion when his low-pitched, deliberate voice is heard, putting judicious views in temperate, lucid, convincing language, he obtains his point. On September 10th he has his last declaration to make in the name of the constitution-committee, a report of their views on education. It is, of course, disputed whether Talleyrand wrote the speech. Some attribute it to Chamfort, others to Condorcet, others to des Renaudes. Talleyrand distinctly claims it, acknowledging his debt to the chief savants of the time—Lagrange, Lavoisier, Laplace, Monge, Condorcet, Vicq d'Azir, la Harpe, and others. It is, in fact, a most remarkable presentation of the best opinions of the time, united in a brilliant scheme of national education. We know that Talleyrand had a habit of writing a heap of scrappy notes and leaving it to his secretary to unite them : just as M. de Bacourt has done with the memoirs. In this sense the finished manuscript is possibly the work of des Renaudes,

but the vast and striking scheme is a construction of Talleyrand's. Long before, Morris had said that education was "the bee in Talleyrand's bonnet."

He begins with a ruthless account of the pre-Revolutionary education, and makes an appeal to the Assembly to complete its work with a worthy system of national instruction. Education must be universal, free, the same for both sexes (this he modifies presently), and must regard adults as well as children. It must include lessons on religion, but its lessons in morality and civism must be completely separated from these, and purely humanitarian. Thinkers must be invited to draw up manuals for this most important section of the code. The organisation must correspond to the civic organisation. The primary schools must be under the control of the elementary political division. Secondary schools must be set up by the District, technical schools by the Department, and there must be a great central Institute at Paris. The State must provide all primary education, and it must found and assist higher schools, but in these the pupil must contribute ; though the State will see that poverty does not exclude able youths. Girls will have equal instruction with boys in the primary schools, and a few higher schools will be provided for them, but the home must be their chief school (this is put in rather awkwardly towards the close). The construction of the scheme must proceed slowly and cautiously. No children under seven shall attend school. The work of the technical or special schools is

very fully discussed. First amongst them he puts "schools of theology," and in these the subtleties of the older theology shall be avoided, and a solid, rational Christian doctrine expounded. There is not a shade of offence to old ideas or colleagues in the phrasing. The work of the medical, legal, and military schools is similarly analysed. The Institute, for which he makes a stirring appeal, is to have the first professors in France and the best laboratories and equipment ; it shall have branches all over the country. Public libraries must be built in connection with all higher schools. The French language is to be purified and strengthened. National fêtes shall be designed by artists and scientists, and form part of the great scheme of uplifting the people.

Jules Simon has described this speech as "at once a law and a book," and Renan says it is "the most remarkable theory of public instruction that has ever been propounded in France." It is certainly a wonderful vision, in its general outline, of the education of the future. No doubt thinkers and reformers of all schools were working for a reform of education. The clergy themselves were prepared on the eve of the States-General to respond to the demand for progress. But only a few in France were fully acquainted with the views of the expert thinkers, and Talleyrand did a fine piece of work in thus presenting them. Unfortunately, a firework of applause was all that he could obtain. The subject was deferred—for ten years, as it turned out. The sadly imperfect education of the

earlier regime was succeeded by the complete absence of it during the Revolution. Talleyrand had to wait for the genius of Napoleon to make a beginning with his scheme. It is growing near to realization in the twentieth century.

On the 30th of September the Constituent Assembly broke up. It had at length completed the constitution. Those who think lightly of its work, who see only its constitution-committee, and that on its vulnerable side, may be asked to conceive France without it during those two years and a half ; as well try to conceive Paris in some order without Lafayette and his National Guard. But what it did, and what its constitution was worth, and how anarchy had grown too strong before it was given—all these things are told in the larger story of the Revolution. One thing it did that affected Talleyrand. It bound its members to refrain from taking office or commission or gift or pension for two years. "Greenish" Robespierre had proposed this. As a consequence the nation was deprived of the service of its most trained and expert governors and administrators. A special gallery was appointed from which they might witness the proceedings of the new Legislative Assembly, and be able to afford friendly hints in private ; but a vast amount of talent was wasted at a critical period. So slow and delicate had been the transfer of executive power, so dazzling the new ideal of liberty to the emancipated, so strong and daring the self-assertion of mobs, so

skilled the art of the demagogue, that the air was thick with dangers. It would need all the sound heads and steady arms in France to launch that new Constitution safely on such waters ; and they began by turning the majority of the soundest and steadiest away.

Talleyrand, with ever mistier prospect in front, did what he could in the next three months. The Girondists had quickly come to power in the new Assembly, decreed death and confiscation against emigrants, and pronounced expulsion against all priests who would not take the oath. They then asked the Department of Paris to furnish a list of suspected priests, but it refused to do so. Talleyrand and several other of its members even went on to beg the King not to sanction the decree of November 29th against the non-swearing priests. The sections at Paris unsuccessfully demanded their impeachment for the letter. Later, in December, we find him prevailing upon the Department to pay the salaries of the non-juring priests. It is his last official act before he leaves France. But the significance of these two acts should not be neglected. At a time when the more violent are seizing power, our excommunicated bishop—our “Judas,” and all the rest—with no position, exerts himself to rescue from them his most bitter opponents.

But Talleyrand had now completed the first part of his career, and was about to enter the path of diplomacy. Paris became less attractive every month. He began to think of foreign embassies. No doubt these also were forbidden by the September decree, but in regard to

these at least it was possible to evade the measure. Moreover, war had at length been decided on, and Talleyrand would be of use in keeping England neutral. Early in December we find an active correspondence going on between Talleyrand, Narbonne (now Minister of War) and de Biron (formally Lauzun). Talleyrand, in the capital, is evidently in close touch with the new Ministry, and not without influence over de Lessart. De Biron is pressed to take up military command ; he in turn suggests that an ambassador should be sent to London. Talleyrand proposes De Biron himself, who knows London well. De Biron cannot be spared from the army, and suggests Talleyrand. De Lessart, the Minister, presses him to accept, and in January he starts for England, with an informal diplomatic mission.

Talleyrand left his country, but not Paris, with reluctance. The Paris he had so much enjoyed up to 1789 was changed, desecrated, beyond endurance. Closed now were most of the fine salons where he had played and talked. Hardly could a Mme. de Staël and a few survivors restore some faint gleam of the faded brilliance. Even her, with all her devotion to him and her great helpfulness, he never loved. "I believe we are both in it, disguised as women," he said, with piercing cruelty, of the novel in which she afterwards depicted their relations.* Apart from one or two houses, Paris was getting insufferable. Ugliness,

* She had introduced a female friend to stand for the man she really intended, Talleyrand.

vulgarity, strident pedantry of the ignorant sort, followed one everywhere. Your servant, sweeping the salon while you spoke to your visitor, could join in the conversation. "Who? Montmorin? He's a scoundrel," interrupted one, while his mistress and visitor were discussing the late minister. The drawing-rooms of new Paris were hung with blatant caricatures. Ladies wore the tricolour even in the shape of boots. Jewellery had been replaced by bits of Bastille stone. Some wore red dresses, of the shade "Foulon's blood." The graceful furniture of the preceding generation was replaced by pseudo-classic of the crudest sort.

Abroad there was no chance of eluding the growing coarseness without hearing the word "aristocroc," if not "lanterne." Old titles had been abolished, as well as armorial bearings. Now "thou" and "thee" were being thought patriotic; the fashion would presently be enforced by law. Patriots of the more thorough kind were discovering that it was beneath the dignity of a man to raise his hat, or bow, or be polite in the old fashion. From equality they were passing on to that idea of fraternity which Chamfort—who was venting lurid phrases in the middle of it all—described as: "Be my brother, or I'll kill thee." Solicitation on the streets or at the Palais became disgusting. *Coureur des filles* had been a term of reproach in the day of *liaisons*. Now 60,000 of them, most of them about 14 or 15 years old, calculated to be making an income of 143,000,000 a year, held the city. Caricatures and pamphlets became grosser

every week, the press more strident and hysterical. Every wall was covered with gaudy placards. Even classic dramas were altered to suit the patriotic taste.

From such a picture the refined noble, to whom the supreme virtue was taste, turned wearily away. At the same time it did seem probable that he could be very useful at London. Pitt's bias for peace was known, as well as the sympathy of Fox and the Opposition. But the emigrants were employing every fair and foul means in their power to alarm and alienate England. For France its neutrality, at least, was supremely important in face of the inevitable war on the continent. Pitt, Grenville and Dundas, were known to be favourable ; but Camden, Thurlow, and especially the King, were very unfavourably disposed. So, urging de Lessart to fix up the fleet—"one must talk to the northern powers with an army, and to England with a fleet"—Talleyrand departed for London, which he reached on January 24th.

His difficulties began before he arrived. He was delayed at the coast for a day, and so did not reach London at the appointed time. But the London press had announced his arrival, all the same, and added that he had been badly received by Pitt. It was the opening of the subterranean campaign of his former friends, now needy and embittered emigrants, at London. Pitt, as a matter of fact, received him with the utmost politeness, but nothing more. He reminded Talleyrand of their earlier meeting at Rheims, and declared his satisfaction at being able to discuss the situation in

France with one so well informed, but said that Talleyrand's unofficial character prevented him from going any further. Talleyrand was, of course, really holding an official and salaried appointment, but no action could be taken that might expose this to the keen scent of the patriots at home. He had to pursue his task with double diplomacy, and he succeeded very well until the Terror made England recoil. He saw the King on February 1st, and was received with frigid correctness; the Queen would not speak to him. He then saw Lord Grenville. For three-quarters of an hour he held Grenville listening to an explanation of the situation, politely suppressing all his attempts to speak, and postponing his answer. But Grenville could only follow Pitt's example. He intimated plainly enough to Citizen Talleyrand in his private capacity that England strongly desired peace, but he could make no official communication to him. Beyond this Talleyrand could do nothing with the Government. It seemed to have a surprising respect for the decree of the Constituent Assembly which said that Talleyrand *must* be a private individual. Talleyrand did not appreciate such virtue. However, he really did a good deal with Grenville in the way of arranging the details of the understanding between the two countries.

On the other hand Talleyrand neglected no opportunity of cultivating English society. When we find him in 1802 instructing the French representative at London to accept all invitations and make frequent

attendance at the Exchange ("there is nearly always a Minister about") we can see his own conduct of 1792. He became very friendly with Lord Lansdowne, and was, naturally, warmly welcomed by Fox, Sheridan, and their party. His chief first impression of England was its slowness ; it is more curious to find that this was the chief impression he himself made on his hosts. This was owing to the reputation of his gay life in the eighties, which had preceded him, and partly to the ineradicable English idea of the French character. No doubt there was some excuse for it in those days. England had listened with open mouth to the news of the grand pyrotechnic displays of French emotion in 1790 and 1791. The reports had not lost colour in crossing the Channel. Journalism and caricature and Burke-oratory had effectively conveyed them to the British imagination. Emigrant conduct during the same period would doubtless confirm the idea that the Frenchman was a bundle of doubly-charged nerves. To these stolid fathers of ours with such an expectation the person of Talleyrand was a mystery. One of the gayest figures of pre-Revolutionary days, with a reputation for keenest wit and brilliant *mots*, and now hot from the crater of the volcano, he was expected to dance and gesticulate and emit electric phrases. Instead they were introduced to a pale, sedate, stolid-looking man, who hardly opened his mouth after the first quiet and brief courtesies were over. With closer friends Talleyrand enjoyed himself in the old way. But he

wore a diplomatic sedateness on ordinary occasions ; and his puffy, rounded face and full figure, his perfect ease and quietness of bearing, and his deep, slow, sententious speech, disconcerted people.

In his letters to de Lessart he shows that his feelings were lively enough beneath this exterior. What with provincial risings and foreign threats and Jacobin violence, poor de Lessart was too distracted to pay adequate attention to Talleyrand's mission, and the letters to him are impatient. "Kill each other or embrace," urged Talleyrand, when he heard of the quarrels at Paris. Moreover, his companion in London had gravely compromised him. Narbonne had given de Biron a commission to buy horses in England for the army, and he accompanied Talleyrand in January. His real purpose was to introduce Talleyrand in London society, with which he was familiar—unfortunately, too familiar ; he was arrested for debt shortly after they landed. De Biron swears the bills were forged, and others talk of emigrant plots. The truth seems to be that he gambled very heavily at the London clubs. At these places the stewards obliged the players with loans, at a good discount. De Biron, dreaming of easy-going Paris, where there were no debtors' prisons, was a good customer. Between former visits and the present one he owed about £16,000. Some of his creditors closed, and the Colonel found himself in the King's Bench. French visitors often failed to realise the new conditions. The Count d'Artois had only

escaped imprisonment by seeking sanctuary at Holyrood. Talleyrand, greatly annoyed, employed Erskine to dispute the bills or raise the plea of "privilege," but he failed on both counts. Lauzun was eventually bought out by Lord Rawdon and a French admirer, and retired in a violent passion to France. The episode was not lost on the emigrants and French libellists, whose spicy contributions to the London press were appreciated. A further source of annoyance was that the *Times* made a violent attack on Talleyrand, on the ground of his constant intercourse with the Opposition and, it alleged, with such men as Tooke and Paine. There is a letter from one of their secret agents to the French Government which says that the English Ministers were annoyed at Talleyrand's relations with the Opposition, but it adds that his culture and dignity have made a good impression in England.

Talleyrand now thought it would be better to have a nominal ambassador at the Court, through whom he could act with greater effect, and he crossed over to Paris in March to persuade de Lessart. That Minister had disappeared when he arrived (March 10th), but he convinced his successor, Dumouriez, of the importance of the matter, and returned to London (April 29th) with three companions (besides des Renaudes, who had been with him all along). Talleyrand had asked for the young Marquis de Chauvelin as ambassador. Duroveray, who knew England, was appointed in much the same position as Talleyrand, and Reinhard was secretary. The long

instructions which were given them, directing them to press for an alliance, or at least for perfect neutrality, and to negotiate a loan with England's credit, and in return for the island of Tobago, were either written by Talleyrand or from his notes. He intended to leave very little to his *prête-nom* ; who, unfortunately, intended to do very much. The idea had been to appoint a competent nonentity. Chauvelin proved both incompetent and self-assertive enough to harass Talleyrand. His luggage was opened at the custom-house and found to contain contraband goods. The hostile press was not impressed by the new embassy. Tory shops in Piccadilly exhibited strong caricatures of Talleyrand. But such insinuations as this were grossly misplaced. Talleyrand had, as a member of the diplomatic committee at Paris, fought successfully against the demand for a revolutionary propaganda abroad, and he censured very severely the conduct of one or two ambassadors who obtruded their republicanism at Foreign Courts. But, besides the incompetence of Chauvelin—who was once sharply pulled up by Lord Grenville for his language, when he had boldly acted without Talleyrand—a great deal of mischief was done by the press on both sides. This letter of Lord Grenville's was published in the emigrant papers, and the King's private letter to George III was published almost before it was delivered. The Parisian journals, on the other hand, were full of tactless and irritating announcements of an impending revolution in England, and attacks on the King and his

Ministers. Few but members of the Opposition would now entertain the French envoys. On one occasion, when they went in a body to Ranelagh, they were most ostentatiously shunned by the whole crowd. English spies were constantly at their heels. Exaggerated reports of events in France were circulated, and Talleyrand was left without any official information. He complained bitterly to Dumouriez of their "painful and embarrassing situation." *

But, in spite of all the difficulties, Talleyrand succeeded very well. If an alliance was concluded with England, Austria would reflect a little longer before interfering in French affairs; hence the desperate intrigues of the royalists to prevent such alliance. On the other hand, the continental coalition against France was strengthening the anti-French elements in England. At the beginning of May Prussia made overtures to England. Pitt rejected them, and stood firm for neutrality. On May 25th he was induced to have a public declaration made of neutrality, and Talleyrand scored his first diplomatic triumph. He does not forget to tell Dumouriez that it would be well if his (Talleyrand's)

* Most of the reports of the embassy to the Foreign Minister (published by Pallain) were obviously written or dictated by Talleyrand. At the end of the report of May 28th Chauvelin is made to say very pointedly that, though he alone signs, "*nous*" means all three of them. In one dispatch Talleyrand thus describes the English (for whom he had a genuine regard: there is not a sharp or sarcastic word about them in these letters): "A nation slow and methodical by temperament, and which, unceasingly occupied with its commercial interests, does not care to be constantly diverted from it by political controversy." He is explaining why the French Revolution has little echo in England."

Talleyrand

name were mentioned in the Paris journals. But Dumouriez was exacting. He pressed for an alliance, and for explicit statements as to England's position if the war in Belgium led to a conflict with Holland. Talleyrand kept his position skilfully between the two Governments, each now impelled by a heated nation, but, in June the French Ministry was again broken up and Dumouriez dismissed. A few days later came the news of the invasion of the Tuileries. A private letter from the Duke de la Rochefoucauld warned Talleyrand of the grave development in Paris, and appealed to him to come over and strengthen the Department of Paris, of which he was still a member.

On July 5th Talleyrand again set out for Paris. He had immediately (June 22nd) applied to the Foreign Minister for leave of absence for a fortnight, in order to come and confer with him at Paris. His real purpose was to study the latest development of the situation. The King was now a mere puppet in the hands of the people; and, without army, France had declared war on Europe. Talleyrand, with a sigh, went over to study this latest phase, and wonder what the abyss would produce next. It proved to be the close of his first diplomatic mission.

CHAPTER VII

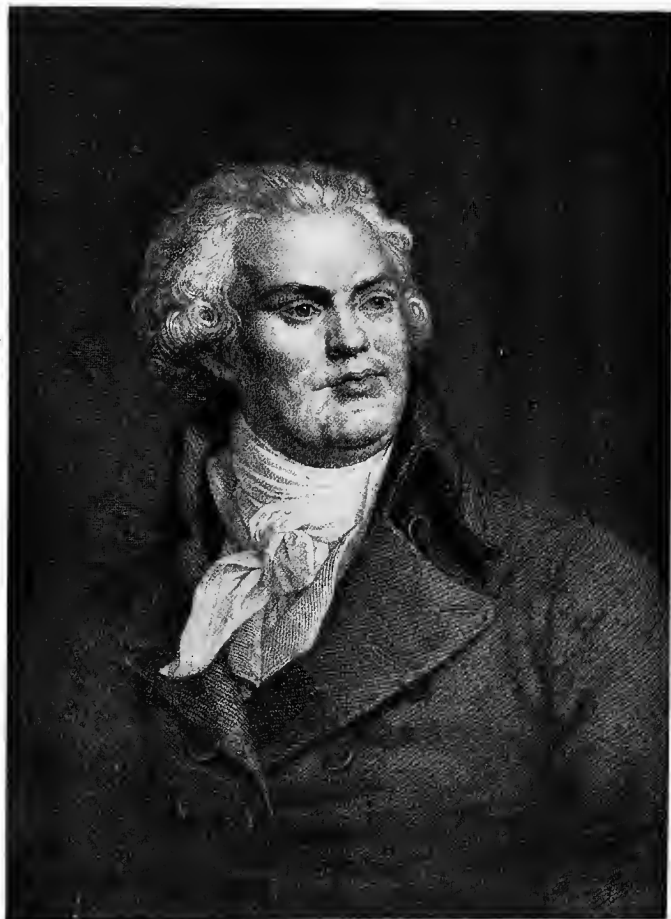
EXILE

TALLEYRAND arrived at Paris just in time to witness the last weak struggle of order against anarchy. Lafayette had flown back to Paris, had fruitlessly appealed to the Legislative Assembly against the Jacobins, had just as fruitlessly appealed to lawless order against lawless disorder, and had retired in despair to his army. However, the Department of Paris, which still represented the orderly and stable elements of the city, had suspended the Mayor, Pétion, the day after Talleyrand left London. The forest of pikes glistened in the streets once more, and the Legislative Assembly was forced to restore Pétion to office and abandon the Department. Talleyrand, la Rochefoucauld, and other moderates, then resigned their positions, and awaited the next step of the mob and the Jacobins. The following day was the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, and though it passed quietly Talleyrand would observe the fiercer attitude of the crowd and its emblems. He and la Rochefoucauld were passing under the balcony of the Tuileries that evening when the Queen nodded to them. Talleyrand must have

made his own reflections on this ; also on the unpleasant spirit it at once provoked in the crowd.

Talleyrand lingered beyond his fortnight. The atmosphere was sultry, electric. Something would happen soon—something graver than all the grave rest. Provincial petitions began to trickle in praying for the deposition of the King. On August 3rd Mayor Pétion comes openly, at the head of the municipal officers in their tricolour scarves, to demand it of the Assembly. The fiery Marseillais have arrived ; fiery troops are pouring in from all parts of France. The official declaration that “ the country is in danger ” has strengthened the Jacobins. On the 8th of August the Assembly refuse to condemn Lafayette, and its refusing majority is hunted by the crowd. On the 9th it must discuss the question of the deposition of the King. It can come to no resolution, and sits wavering between the pale ghost of loyalty and the city of pikes. That night the insurrection becomes fully conscious of its power. At sunrise the grim flood surges again about the walls and flows over the terraces and through the outer gates of the Tuileries. The Swiss guards are provoked into firing, and within a few hours nearly 2,000 lie dead. Paris has tasted blood now with fearful effect. It has 1,200 patriots to avenge. The King is “ suspended ” ; a National Convention is summoned, with no restriction whatever on electors or candidates.

What Talleyrand thought at this time we do not know, but we can confidently assume. The last particle



DANTON.

of his constitutional ideal was disappearing. Still he clung to France for a few days. Danton, now all-powerful as Minister of Justice, had been his colleague in the Department, and seems to have been not indifferent to him. Something might yet be done. They induced him to write a defence of the events of the 10th to pacify England. This document—which must be admitted to come from Talleyrand's pen—has been gravely censured. It is certainly a desperate appeal, but, save for an odd phrase that is diplomatically exaggerated, is not indefensible. We can well imagine what the French papers in London were making of the 10th. Talleyrand, in the name of the new executive (bound to defend its supporters), put the other side of the matter. He strongly, but justly, criticises the conduct of the royal family, as being seriously provocative. The only downright injustice is when he speaks of the Swiss guards as the "cowardly satellites" of the monarchy. Lady Blennerhassett thinks this unpardonable. It is certainly a harsh phrase to write over men who died a brave and noble death, but the truth is that many of them were encouraging the crowd to advance when the others (unknown to them very probably) began their deadly fire.

Lady Blennerhassett sees a grave inconsistency, inspired by a base motive, in Talleyrand's protesting against the affair of June 20th, and then condoning the worse attack of August 10th and siding with the Jacobins. We must remember that many things had

happened since July 13th. Hostile armies hung threateningly on the frontier ; one must take desperate measures now to secure the continued neutrality of England. Further, on July 13th it was not at all certain that the Jacobins could not be checked ; it was now clear that one must work with them or through them, or desert the country to its fate, for no human judgment, not patriotically intoxicated, could see how Prussia, Austria and Brunswick were to be held off. It is a sheer perversion of history to say that Talleyrand deserted the King after August 10th. He had deserted his *cause* long ago ; his *person*, his life and liberty, Talleyrand never willingly saw endangered ; nor did he ever cease to be a partisan of limited monarchy. It is, indeed, a question if the events of August 10th did not put the royalist cause in a more hopeful plight. Certainly the royalists thought so. These events doubled the pace of the armies that were heading towards Paris. Finally, it is quite impossible to see that Talleyrand expected any advantage out of the new administration.

Briefly, then, Talleyrand was perfectly consistent in writing the official "explanation" of August 10th. One would imagine from some of the references to it that it was a blatantly patriotic boast of the affair ; one need only recollect that it was written by an astute diplomatist to a well-informed country, and for a strictly conciliatory purpose. It merely pointed out the extenuating features of the "terrible events" with diplomatic casuistry. We

must not judge Talleyrand as if he had ever believed in the divine right of Kings. Nor had he any particular grounds of personal loyalty to King or Queen ; nor can he be accused of untruth in laying on the royalist cause the burden of the Austrian and Prussian invasions.

But Lady Blennerhassett is herself unpardonable when she says Talleyrand's destiny "dragged him deeper still, into the bloody torrent of the September massacres." This is a most unhappy way of expressing the fact that Talleyrand was a disgusted spectator of those awful scenes, and that he fled the country as soon as they happened. We lose sight of him from August 18th, when he penned the diplomatic defence of Danton, until September 14th. On that day Barrère finds him leaving Danton's room in travelling dress with a passport for London.* Danton had sent his friend Noel to London to supersede Chauvelin and keep England neutral. At the beginning of September Noel had written to say that negotiations seemed possible (August 10th had evidently not been regarded as inexcusable at London), and Danton had thought the conditions suggested were not unacceptable. Meantime, the hostile forces were converging successfully on Paris. On August 29th comes terrible news of Prussians, Austrians and Brunswick, and of the rising in La Vendée. There are not weapons, when even women offer to bear them. Danton gets an order for a visitation of suspected houses and incarceration of

* But the passport is dated the 7th, and we know of a still earlier application to leave.

suspects. Royalists are leading every invading army. Paris is in the last stage of the new "intoxication." The awful story of the first week of September has been told often enough. By Thursday evening Talleyrand would hear that more than a thousand men and women, mostly innocent, had been savagely murdered. The next day he obtained from Danton a passport: "Leave to pass to Citizen Talleyrand, going to London by our order."

The last phase of the movement he had followed since May 6th, 1789, was too repulsive. He could say no longer that "provided he remained French, he was prepared for anything." He was not prepared for murder. His one thought was to leave France. On the pretext of a mission to persuade England to adopt the metrical system he received permission to leave. Research in the archives of the Foreign Office has brought to light (says M. Pallain) a letter in which Talleyrand asks permission to return and continue his work in London before the end of August, when the guillotine had already begun its work. He did not, therefore wait until there was personal danger before he fled. He did not cling to ruling powers until their long lists were drawn up. However, he would probably have less difficulty than is supposed in securing permission to leave from Danton. It was more than ever imperative to have an able man in London. The British Ambassador, like all others, had fled from Paris. Noel had to face a storm of indignation in England.

Danton would, one imagines, see no more useful man in the emergency than Talleyrand. However that may be, he left Paris on September 14th, not to return until the long story of the reign of violence was over. His "real aim" was, he says, to get away from France ; but he applied for a passport so as not to close the door behind him in the event of his wishing to return.

He arrived in England on the 23rd, only to find, as he expected, his whole diplomatic work in sad danger. He announced his arrival to the Foreign Office, denying that he had any mission, but expressing his readiness to give information. He was not invited to give any. A good deal has been written on the question whether he had a mission or no, but the solution is hardly obscure when all the evidence is read. While denying in England (and even in a letter to Danton) that he had any mission, he told several correspondents that he had, and in his later petition from America he claimed that he was enjoined to prevent a rupture between England and France. The conflict of evidence is easily reconciled if we suppose he had an informal, secret understanding to that effect with Danton. It is the most likely thing to happen in the circumstances. In any case he had not long to continue his delicate task. The Opposition in England was prepared to support him to very great lengths, even after the triumphant Jacobins at Paris had decreed a war of revolutionary propaganda. Talleyrand always regarded this as a fatal step, and he even now wrote to Paris

to counteract the feeling. The very able memorandum "On the actual relations of France to the other States of Europe," which he forwarded to Lebrun, now Chief Minister, and to several members of the Convention, has been published by Pallain. It is a finely-written and sober political document. To the new idea of French dominance he replies that "the only useful and reasonable dominance, the only one that becomes free and enlightened men, is to be master of one's self, and never to make the ridiculous pretention to domineer over others." It is time that a mature France had done with illusions. An understanding with free nations, for peaceful, commercial purposes, should be the ideal. Wars of aggrandisement should be condemned. It is a very sincere and admirable political gospel.

By a curious chance it must have reached Paris* just before the Convention began to discuss the question of putting its author on the list of emigrants, forbidden to return under pain of death. A letter had been found amongst the King's papers, in which Laporte, the King's steward, had reported (in April, 1791) that Talleyrand was anxious to serve him. On the strength of this letter condemnation was passed on December 5th, and Talleyrand was made an exile. A letter, signed D. (probably from des Renaudes, but possibly Danton), was

* Lady Blennerhassett makes it precede the Jacobin propagandist decrees, and so not only robs it of half its credit, but finds it in a ridiculous predicament. She dates the memorandum November 2nd. It is really dated the 25th.

inserted in the *Moniteur* in defence of Talleyrand. It appealed to the minister Lebrun, and others to whom Talleyrand had sent his patriotic memorandum a few days before, to produce this proof of his loyalty. Talleyrand himself wrote a letter to the *Gazette* in which he flatly denied that he had any relations whatever with the King or Laporte. He claimed that the only particle of truth on which one could make such a statement was that he had written a report in defence of freedom of worship (which we have considered, dated May 7th, 1791), in which he upheld the King's right to the ministration of a non-juring priest. Laporte, he said, must have seen this memorandum as it circulated privately—as so many speeches did—before May 7th, and interpreted it to mean that Talleyrand favoured the King. It is likely enough, and at all events we have no further evidence. But the defence was of no avail. Talleyrand remained on the proscribed list for three years.

It is not probable that Talleyrand would have ventured again to live at Paris during those years. He *was* an aristocrat, even if he clothed himself from head to foot in tricolour. He was a man of refined and humane temper, and could not possibly have co-operated further with the sanguinary parties that now came to power. At the most he would wish to retain a distant connection in the event of an improvement in the condition of Paris. A few days after reaching London, in accepting an invitation to Bowood, he wrote to Lord

Lansdowne that "when one has passed the last two months at Paris one needs to come and refresh oneself with the conversation of superior people." Then came news of the impeachment and trial of the King. London listened with growing horror and disgust to the details of the "trial." On January 21st Louis was guillotined. On January 24th the late French ambassador, Chauvelin, the only official-looking Frenchman the Government could find, was swept out of England. On February 1st the Convention declared war against England and Holland (the one entanglement that endangered England's neutrality). Talleyrand found the door which he had so cleverly contrived to leave open violently slammed upon him.

He says in the memoirs that he did not intend to stay long in England. In fact, we know now that he applied about this time for permission to settle in Tuscany, but the Grand Duke had to refuse on the ground of his neutrality. The position must have been trying for a man of Talleyrand's taste and ambition. If we may trust his later observations, his mind wandered unsteadily from one country to another and one occupation to another. He settled down, however, to the life of an emigrant in London, and managed to spend a year not unpleasantly. His library had been transferred to London,* and he spent his mornings in writing. He

* Fortunately for him, as it now proved his only resource outside of France. His fine collection passed under the hammer at Sotheby's in April (1793). The sale lasted ten days and realised more than £2,000. Talleyrand puts it at £700, but I have seen a catalogue with the prices

does not tell us the subject, but says that when he had returned to France a huge mass of his notes and memoranda came over from London. He would have us believe that they proved of little use for the writing of his memoirs, but the chapter on the Duc d'Orléans is so ample and circumstantial that it seems to have been written at an early date, and was not improbably written in 1793. It affords a thorough reply to the rumours, for which no documentary ground has ever been discovered by his most bitter enemies, that he was secretly working with the Orleanist group. He did not frequent the Palais Royal in a political capacity.

But in spite of emigrant hatred and the general British hostility to France, he found a sufficiently large social circle in London. Mme. de Genlis had come to England with her niece. Talleyrand offered her a little money out of his small fund, and actually did assist other compatriots. Many of them were, as is known, living in bitter poverty. Mme. de Staël came over in January and remained until the summer. She took a house near Richmond, and Talleyrand spent a good deal of his time there. In Kensington the Countess de la Châtre kept a house, where many of Talleyrand's old friends met. Narbonne had with difficulty got away—with the assistance of Mme. de Staël and Talleyrand—at

filled in. Another somewhat mysterious sale of a French diplomatist's library took place at Sotheby's in 1816, realising £8,000. The King's librarian describes this collection also as having belonged to Talleyrand, and in that case the earlier sale would not represent his whole library. But we shall see that it is almost impossible to trace the second sale to Talleyrand.

the beginning of September. Rivarol and Lalley-Tollendal and many other constitutionalists were there. Fox and Sheridan and their friends afforded a fairly large circle of English acquaintances. Lord Lansdowne continued friendly long after he left England. At his house Talleyrand speaks of frequently meeting Hastings, Price, Priestly, Romilly, and Jeremy Bentham. His reputation for culture and conversation opened many doors. Sydney Smith was brought in contact with him somewhere, and says that he found him unequal to his reputation ; but one imagines that Sydney Smith would not be unbiassed, and he admits he could not understand his French. The German physician, Bollmann, found him so charming that he "could listen to him for years." On the whole, Talleyrand fared better than most of his indigent companions, though the enforced idleness annoyed him. "Patience and sleep," he told Mme. de Staël, was his programme for the present. In another letter he described his chief occupations as "fishing and correcting proofs" (of Mme. de Flahaut's novel).

It is from the letters he wrote to Mme. de Staël after her return to France that we find he is still watching the situation in that country without despair. In one letter he sketches a plan. The southern provinces, which still show some attachment to the constitution, should unite, and invite the members of the old Constituent Assembly to meet at Toulon. He believes that the nation is still attached to the



From an engraving, after the picture by F. Gérard.

MADAME DE STAËL.

[p. 132.]

constitution, and that it is really in the supposed defence of this that they have risen against King and invaders. When he hears of the execution of the Queen he has to modify his view. "It is all over with the house of Bourbon in France," he says; but he never believed that France would remain permanently republican. His wistful speculations, which were equally resented by republicans in France and royalists out of it (who charged the constitutionalists with bringing all his misfortunes on the King), were cut short at the beginning of 1794 by a peremptory order to quit England within five days (in another place Talleyrand says twenty-four hours).

The order was inexcusable, but no influence that Talleyrand could command had any effect on it. A law had been passed twelve months before empowering the Government to expel undesirable aliens, and it had been applied to Noel and Chauvelin. Talleyrand may have feared its extension to him at first, when he applied for residence in Tuscany, but he was not prepared for this cruel application after twelve months of peaceful life in London. He pressed his most influential friends to obtain some explanation, at least, of the order, but none was given. In the end, he attributed it to intrigues of his emigrant enemies, and one can see no other reason for it. He was the only distinguished Frenchman of moderate views to incur the order. Sainte-Beuve says it "proves he was not in the odour of virtue." It, at all events, proved, if this needed proof, that he had

enemies. He protested to Pitt and to the King, but it was no use, and he took ship for America on February 3rd. His letters to Lord Lansdowne and Mme. de Staël show a very natural bitterness of feeling, but even at this time he hardly blamed England. But when the ship was detained at Greenwich he refused an invitation from Dundas to spend the time at his house, saying that he could not set foot on English soil again after receiving such an order.

The romantic biographers have enlivened his voyage with adventures. They tell how the Dutch vessel in which he sailed was stopped and searched by an English frigate, and Talleyrand dressed himself in the cook's clothes to pass the scrutiny. M. Michaud, as usual, does not deign to mention his authority. Talleyrand only says that the ship was beaten back by heavy storms, and seemed at one time in danger of being driven on the French coast. It did put in at Falmouth for repairs, and Talleyrand landed there, so that his objection to English soil was relaxing. He was told that an American general was staying at an inn in the town, and he found that it was General Arnold, who would hardly give him an attractive picture of his future home. Whether it was from this conversation, or from a real weariness of spirit (or, in fine, a freak of memory in later years), he says that he did not want to leave ship when they reached Philadelphia. Another ship was sailing out as they reached the mouth of the Delaware, and he sent a boat to learn its destination. It was going to Calcutta,

and he wanted, he says, to take a berth in it, but could not get one. He landed at Philadelphia with his companions, M. de Beaumetz and des Renaudes, towards the end of March.

A number of acquaintances had preceded him to America. When the emigration began people recollected the lively stories brought back by Lafayette and his companions, and many who either had wealth or wanted to make it sailed to the States. At Philadelphia, Talleyrand found a Dutchman named Casenove, whom he had known at Paris, and who now proved useful to him. There were half-a-dozen emigrants in Philadelphia, and they met at nights over gay but frugal suppers, at the house of Moreau-Saint-Méry, who had opened a book-store there. Michaud says Talleyrand opened a store for the sale of night-caps; the legend probably grew out of a curious custom of Talleyrand's of wearing several of these at night. But Talleyrand was evidently very restless and irritated. Washington declined to grant him a formal interview, and Talleyrand refused, as he says, to go to see him by the back door. The only man whose friendship relieved the depression of that time was Colonel Alexander Hamilton, whom Talleyrand describes as the ablest statesman then living, not excepting Pitt and Fox. They had long conversations on political and economic subjects, and were happily agreed on most matters; though Hamilton was a moderate Protectionist and Talleyrand a strong Free-trader.

Talleyrand sought some relief by a voyage into the interior with Beaumetz and a Dutch friend, Heydecooper. He was not insensible to the natural beauty of the forests and prairies, which he describes with unusual literary care, but he was chiefly impressed with the vast possibilities of these leagues of uncultivated territory. Within a few miles of every sea-coast town you plunged into virgin forests, and from the hill-tops you looked over illimitable oceans of wild growth. A thoughtful traveller like Talleyrand could not but speculate on the future of the country. Convinced as he was of the primary importance of agriculture, the future of America had a peculiar interest for him. But as he wandered from town to town, and saw more of the people, he felt some disappointment in them. The idealist fervour which he expected to find still glowing, within a few years of the declaration of independence, seemed to be wholly extinct. In fact, if Talleyrand had been able to anticipate that elegant phrase, he would have said "making their pile" was the chief preoccupation of the Americans of 1794. Without bitterness, but with something like sadness, he tells a number of stories about his experience. He met a fairly rich man in one town who had never been to Philadelphia. He would like to see Washington, the man assented to Talleyrand's inquiry, but he would very much rather see Bingham, who was reported to be very wealthy. At another place he noticed that his host put his hat—a hat that a Parisian stable-boy would not

wear, he says—on a beautiful table of Sèvres porcelain brought from the Trianon. When Talleyrand speaks impatiently of America as “a country without a past,” he is thinking of these incongruities ; there had not yet been time in the history of America for the fixing of inviolable canons. In some other respects the features of life in this new country were amusing. In a log cabin on the Ohio they found some good bronzes and a fine piano. When Beaumetz opened it, however, the owner had to ask him to spare them ; the nearest tuner lived a hundred miles away, and had not called that year.

Talleyrand makes it clear that he understands how these features of American life are inseparable from its newness and its pioneering character, but he feels the discord too keenly to enjoy it on its adventurous and picturesque sides. “If I have to stay here another year I shall die,” he wrote to Mme. de Staël. He appreciates the sincerity of their religious life after that of pre-Revolutionary Paris, but a country of thirty-two religions and only one sauce does not suit him. He wrote a long letter to Lord Lansdowne (February 1st, 1795), with the view of bringing about a better understanding between England and America. The independence of the States is settled for ever, he says ; there is no question whatever of a reversion to the status of a British colony. Nevertheless, though feeling is at present averted from England and turning towards France, the link between the

two nations is strong and natural. All the institutions of America and all its economic features (which he discusses at great length) compel it to look in friendly interest to England. In June and July he sent other brief notes to Lord Lansdowne. In June, moreover, he heard of the rout of the Jacobins at Paris. In the memoirs he affirms (and the most indulgent admiration fails to ascribe *this* to a freak of memory) that the National Convention rescinded the decree against him "without any request on my part." We have a copy of the petition he wrote to the Convention on June 16th, pressing for the removal of his name from the proscribed list. He urges that the reasons for putting him on the list were frivolous, but he had not been able to return to Paris to contest them, because "under the tyranny of Robespierre" the prisons were violated, and he would be executed without trial. It is probably about the same time that he wrote to Mme. de Staël, who quotes his words in a later letter to him.

Whether Talleyrand despaired of obtaining permission to return he does not say, but he tells us that in the autumn of 1795 he and his friend Beaumetz invested their small capital in stocking a ship for the East Indies. They had seen the first American adventurers return from India in 1794 with rich spoils, and seem to have caught the Indian fever that then broke out in America. They were joined by a number of Philadelphia firms, and their ship was about to start when the Fates intervened. How

the biography of Talleyrand would have run if this adventure had been permitted it is difficult to conjecture. In fact, the whole story has a most undeniable odour of legend about it, but, apart from a few details (such as that of Beaumetz attempting to murder him in New York) which the romanticists add on their own authority, it is Talleyrand himself who tells it, in the memoirs. I am not quite sure that this puts it beyond dispute, but probably we should admit it, and see in it a proof of the most unusually restless and irritated temper he had fallen into in America. However, his petition had succeeded at Paris. Mme. de Staël, who was sincerely devoted to him, induced Legendre and Boissy d'Anglas to favour the petition. It was presented to the Convention on September 4th, and supported by M. J. Chénier and the ex-Oratorian, Daunou. Talleyrand's name was erased from the list of *émigrés*, and he was described as an unappreciated patriot. He had struck the right note in alluding to "the tyranny of Robespierre." The various sections of the Terrorists had annihilated each other in mutual distrust; and more peaceful, if not quite more admirable, elements had come to power. In the summer of 1795 the Jacobin Club was closed, and the once terrible name was now laughingly hurled at one as "Jacoquin." Sanculottist Paris had risen in insurrection twice, and had twice been chased back into its slums. Chénier had only to describe Talleyrand as a victim of the persecutions of Marat and Robespierre, and "the perfidy of

Pitt," and one whose "noble conduct as a priest and man had greatly promoted the Revolution," and his name was struck off the black list. He let Beaumetz sail alone for India, bade farewell to Hamilton and la Rouchefoucauld and his many friends in the States, and sailed for Europe in a Danish vessel in November. He had not been thirty (as he says), but twenty, months in America. It had seemed longer.*

* I have referred already to a legend assigning his birth to America. The only foundation for this is that he visited Mount Desert, and, as he limped about, reminded the older inhabitants of a lame boy, born there of a French officer and American girl in 1754, and afterwards taken to France. In spite of the fact that Talleyrand's father was a distinguished noble of high character attached to Versailles; that the father's wife, daughter of the Marquis d'Antigny, acknowledged Charles Maurice to her death in 1809, and was supported by him in her later years; that the interest in him of his great-grandmother, his uncle, and every member and friend of the family was known to all France; this legend has been put forward in America (*Bookman*, September 26th, 1901) as worthy of serious consideration. There is hardly another character in recent history about whom myths have been so blindly entertained.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REGENERATED PARIS

THE ship in which Talleyrand had sailed from America was bound for Hamburg, which it reached in January, 1796. The prudent diplomatist wanted to take a nearer look at the regenerated capital of his country before re-entering it. His discretion was timely. In October the mob had risen for a third time against the new authority, and Citizen Buonaparte had swept it back definitively into powerlessness in the space of two hours. But the new rulers had a strong family resemblance to the old. The five Directors had to be regicides ; Sieyès, who had voted for "death without any fuss" on poor Louis, had made this new constitution. In the two new Chambers, the Council of the Five Hundred and the Council of Ancients, a two-thirds majority was to be taken over from the dissolving Convention. One-third had to be elected by the country, now returning to sobriety ; but until the old majority should be broken by the retirement and re-election of a fresh third in May the situation was not reassuring. There remained a good deal of bitterness against emigrant aristocrats and their friends.

Mme. de Staël was herself attacked with some virulence, and had to leave the country. Talleyrand decided to remain for the present at Hamburg.

There was a lively and interesting company at that time at Hamburg, and Talleyrand met many old friends. He tells us in the memoirs, with that tinge of malice that at times borders on ill-nature, that Madame de Flahaut, who was there, sent out a note to the ship before he landed, asking him to return to America. Her husband, Count Flahaut, had been guillotined during the Revolution, and his widow had met at Hamburg, and was about to marry, the Portuguese Minister, the Marquis de Souza. She felt that the presence of Talleyrand might lead to embarrassment. But Talleyrand was not heroic enough to face the ocean and America again in her matrimonial service. Another interesting friend he found at Hamburg was Mme. de Genlis. He found so little change in her that, unconscious of its application to others, he is tempted to pen an aphorism : "The fixity of compound natures is due to their suppleness." His former Secretary of Embassy at London, and later friend and colleague, Reinhard, was there, and they increased their attachment during those months of waiting. His former chief, General Dumouriez, had fled there. Besides the French emigrants of all parties, there was also a group of Irish rebels, led by Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Apart from the anxiety and inactivity, the time would pass pleasantly.

In May the elections for the Chambers strengthened the moderate element at Paris, and it became once more habitable. But Talleyrand took his time in returning. From Hamburg he went in the summer to Amsterdam, and in a fortnight passed on to Brussels, where he remained for a month or two. The story of his going to Berlin for three months on a secret mission seems to be apocryphal. In September he re-entered Paris.

We are left to imagine the feelings with which he contemplated the regenerated capital of the Republic. He had last lived there in 1792, when equality and fraternity were expressing themselves with such ungraceful logic. The Revolution was now spent. Equality and fraternity were forgotten ; liberty was construed in a sense that made even the liberal shudder. The Paris that had issued from the womb of the Revolution, with such fangs as of a giant offspring, was a grotesque abortion. The poor were as poor as ever, as despised as ever, as much preyed on by parasites as ever. But the new class that filled the theatres and the larger houses was insufferable. An epidemic of speculation had set in. Brokers and bankers met you at every corner, and shrill females assailed you in the streets with bundles of notes. The paper-money of the successive authorities and the confiscation of ecclesiastical and emigrant property had led to these spectacles. Some won the prizes, and, if they succeeded in carrying their money beyond the "camp of Tartars" at the Palais

Egalité, bought emigrant hotels and entered "Society"—a society such as the world has rarely seen. The frequent mention of freedom during the last few years had led to a study of the life of the "free peoples of antiquity," which rested on slavery. Sonorous Greek and Latin names decorated the new generation. Greek and Roman garments hung about their slim Parisian persons. The men got the idea that the *hetairæ* were the chief feature of classic life : and the women thought it was the use of transparent dress—though it is gratifying to learn that some of them were hooted when they attempted to walk the Bois in this costume. Wealthy brokers built Roman homes, not forgetting the fish ponds, for their *amies*. The journals announced as many divorces as marriages. What with war and guillotine and pike the multiplication of patriots had become urgently necessary, and the only qualification for fraternity was patriotism ; they had long before anticipated Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, and proposed to supply such as the Abbé Fauchet with a harem of twenty healthy *citoyennes*. Actresses and adventuresses and ex-nuns were fought for by men who had made fortunes on flour or paper-money, or emigrant property, and clothed with the wardrobes of dead princesses, and reopened the salons of the old regime ; the furniture, decorations, and social forms not a little confused. At table they ate and drank much, and talked little. Balls, especially fancy dress balls, were held daily, transparent trousers and the light costume of heathen goddesses not

being prohibited in an age of liberty. Churches and convents had been turned into restaurants and dancing-rooms for the most part.

When Chateaubriand returned to Paris a few years later (and it had improved a little), he said that he felt as if he was going into the mouth of hell. On different grounds Talleyrand may have said much the same. His moral ideal was taste. License without refinement he felt to be immoral. He had, too, a deep sense of humour and of humanity. The one was inflamed at every turn; the other was afflicted at the spectacle of this pitiful issue of all the sacrifices of the last six years. As usual, he looked about for stray consolations, and awaited developments. At the "Constitutional Club" he met whatever liberal, decent men there were left in Paris. He was, indeed, welcomed by the new queens of the salons, as Lytton assures us. In the revenge of time a "grand seigneur" of the old regime had come to be regarded as a superior being once more. A few with titles and empty purses in their pockets, were still living at, or had returned to Paris; they made excellent *maitres d'hôtel*. Talleyrand, with his high reputation for wit, culture and laxity, was regarded as a *ci-devant* worth cultivating. Only occasionally, if reports may be trusted, did he express himself. One story goes that a lady of the transparent trousers order once invited him to her house, and donned her classic garments for the occasion. On the following day, when she had a numerous company, a

box arrived from Talleyrand, containing "a costume for Madame." She opened it before her jealous friends with great eagerness. It contained a fig-leaf. On the other hand Talleyrand was made a member of the Institut, the founding of which he had advocated in 1791. He read two papers there with his usual success. The first dealt with the commercial relations of England with the United States; the second pointed out the advantages to be derived from the new colonies. Talleyrand believed in the virtue of colonial work for the regeneration of an enfeebled or overcrowded nation. He was, he says, preparing a third paper on the influence of society in France, but was dissuaded from giving it. He would hardly venture to touch such a subject at that time, but it is a pity he has not left us the paper.

With that disregard for mere truthfulness in small matters which we notice throughout the memoirs (when there is a motive), he tells us that he kept aloof from politics, and only yielded after some refusals to the solicitations of Mme. de Staël. We know perfectly well that he was at the end of his purse, and was, if for no other reason, compelled to seek public service. He wrote to Mme. de Staël that he had only the means of subsistence for another month, and he would "blow his brains out if she did not find him a place." He had then been in Paris more than six months, and saw no opening. Michaud says that he had left what little money remained to him (50,000 francs) in a bank at

Hamburg. Castellane tells a curious story of his having left his silver in charge of a number of market-women when he left France, and says that he collected every bit of it when he returned in 1796. But he had now an establishment to keep up. The diplomatist had been smitten at last by an unexpected type of woman. When Madame Grand first met him, or first lived with him, it is quite impossible to determine. The more plausible authorities are contradictory, and the lady's career has been as thickly encrusted with romance as that of Talleyrand. Her nationality is doubtful. Her father is generally believed to have been an Englishman, though some speak of him as a Dutch sailor, and others as a Breton. She was born in India, and her mother is said to have been a native. She was married, when young, to a Swiss, M. Grand, but he had divorced her when she had captivated no less a person than Sir Philip Francis. When Sir Philip returned to England, she came to Paris, and for some years we trace her indistinctly flitting between Paris, London and Hamburg. It may have been at Hamburg, but her German biographer thinks it was more probably at Paris, in 1797, that she met and captured Talleyrand.

Three points about her are clearly established. She was very beautiful—"the beauty of two centuries," one enthusiast says—not at all cultured, and very far from puritanical. Her lithe, graceful figure, pure white forehead, wide-opened, tender blue eyes, with long, dark lashes, and especially her long, soft, golden-brown hair

—"the most wonderful hair in Europe"—are described by contemporaries with some warmth. The obvious strain of Indian blood in her complexion and bearing increased the charm, and her intellectual deficiency was not accentuated by any attempt to conceal it. She seems to have been devoted to her distinguished protector, and although she later admitted a Spanish prince to a share in her affection, she always spoke of him with great admiration. Talleyrand must have loved her in return. It is true that he only married her under compulsion from Napoleon, but most of his biographers quite wrongly suppose that he was, from the ecclesiastical point of view, *ever* free to marry. They lived together, affectionately and faithfully, as far as one can tell, until—twelve years later—the Princess Talleyrand was infatuated by the Prince of Spain. Talleyrand explains his choice of a woman without culture on the ground that "a woman of intelligence often compromises her husband ; without it, she can only compromise herself." The truth seems to be that there was no calculation whatever in the match. The plain phrase, he fell in love with her, accurately describes what happened. A man of exceptional mental power often finds the ablest of his female contemporaries, with their strain and effort to reach his level, impossible companions ; moreover, Talleyrand was a deeply amorous and uxorious man. When friends had pointed out to him that his actress-friend at Saint Sulpice was without mental gifts, he said he had not noticed it. Mme. de Flahaut—for whom,



From an engraving, after a picture by F. Gérard.

MADAME TALLEYRAND.

[p. 148.

however, one can only admit a qualified attachment—had kept almost the only non-political house in Paris before the Revolution.

It was now more needful than ever to secure an appointment.* Mme. de Staël lent Talleyrand 24,000 francs, and promised to use her influence on the Directorate. Lytton connects Talleyrand's appointment with the reading of his papers at the Institut. Two of the Directors, Rewbell and Reveillère belonged to it, and possibly heard his second paper on July 13th. These were the most decent members of the group of five which then ruled France, and it is natural that they should appreciate Talleyrand's worth to the country. But Mme. de Staël won over the most important of the five, Barras, and induced him to invite Talleyrand to dine at his house at Suresnes. The other four lived with their families in a modest and respectable fashion under the eyes of the people at the Luxembourg. Barras, an aristocrat by birth, but coarse, violent, and sensual, made a good deal of money by secret commissions, and kept a lively establishment at Suresnes, besides the apartments at the Luxembourg where Mme. Tallien presided. An accident afforded a good opportunity to Talleyrand. Whilst he waited at Barras' house the latter's aide-de-camp, a youth to whom he was greatly attached, was drowned in the river, and

* To be quite accurate, I must add that it is by no means certain Talleyrand met Mme. Grand before he became Minister. Mme. Rémusat makes her come to his ministerial bureau for a passport at their first meeting.

it fell to Talleyrand to console the very distressed Director. He made a useful impression on Barras ; in fact that functionary some time later paid him the awkward compliment of saying that his ways "would sweeten a dung-hill." There was a change in the Ministry soon afterwards, and Barras warmly presented Talleyrand for foreign affairs. Rewbell and Reveillère supported him. Carnot opposed everything that Barras proposed, and Barthélemy followed Carnot. But the three carried the nomination. That night at ten o'clock Talleyrand was called out of the Salon des Étrangers by a gens-d'arme. He brought an official notification signed by Carnot. Talleyrand foolishly wastes a paragraph or two in explaining several reasons why he felt bound to accept. One would like him better if he had devoted them to a grateful acknowledgment of the help given him by Mme. de Staël. But she seems to have bored him a good deal, and in any case they had separated before these pages were written. "She has only one defect," he once said : "She is insufferable."

Thus did Talleyrand enter upon the second stage of his diplomatic career. From his professional point of view the situation was superb. France was still at war with the world, but the success of Napoleon was gradually bringing matters to the point where diplomacy begins. There was the prospect of a long series of treaties. Talleyrand was, as ever, ardently desirous of peace ; he wrote to Madame de Staël with that

assurance.* Unfortunately, his chiefs were very meddling, very quarrelsome, and not very competent. They "had been chosen in anger, and had not transcendent ability," says Mme. de Staël. Barras, a violent ex-soldier, with a good judgment and some penetration, was a Dantonist, and of loose and luxurious life. Carnot, the second strong man, detested Barras on both counts. He was a Robespierrean, a man of strict conduct, shrewd but narrow. Rewbell, a moderate, a lawyer of ability and integrity, but rather gruff, detested both Carnot and Barras and their traditions. Reveillère, honest and peaceful, tried to mediate. Barthélemy, ex-abbé, supported Carnot. Their deliberations were lively. At the first meeting of the Directorate that Talleyrand attended Carnot, raising his hand, swore that some accusation of Barras' was untrue. "Don't raise your hand," shouted Barras; "it would drip with blood." "These are the men," says Talleyrand, "with whom I was to work to reintroduce France into European society." He would not even see the good points of his colleagues of the Institut. Reveillère was a supporter of the new "Theophilanthropists" — "a gang of thieves," says Talleyrand, with bitter levity. The Theophilanthropists correspond to what are now called "Ethical Societies." They hired halls, in which they had moral discourses and lectures on philosophy, with singing of undogmatic hymns.

* Let me add, too, that the letter is full of gratitude to her. "I love you with my whole soul" is his sincere (if rather Gallic) expression.

With the very few churches left active in Paris, they formed the only sobering influence. But Talleyrand had, by the time he wrote his memoirs, lost all admiration of the philosophic morality he had so much appreciated in his speech on education.

Moreover, the Directors left their Ministers no initiative. Talleyrand says he had little to do except sign documents drawn up by them and give passports. On one occasion Rewbell compelled him to re-write the instructions he was sending to envoys. The romantic biographers describe another occasion when, they say, Barras threw an ink-pot at him. Representatives abroad complained that France had no policy. The Directors were too slavishly influenced by their emissaries, and each of them had his own plan. There was, too, the eternal scarcity of money. At the Department the salaries of most of the officials were in arrears. At his official residence he would have us believe that the servants were dining off Sèvres dishes because they could not afford to buy earthenware.

The difficulty increased rapidly. There was still great distress in the country, and plots against the Directory were continual; one writer says there was an average of one per day. Six weeks after Talleyrand's nomination a crisis occurred, and his conduct during it has been severely censured. The relaxation of the more violent measures had encouraged the royalists and other malcontents to act more vigorously. Evidence reached the Directors (partly from Napoleon) of a

powerful and far-reaching conspiracy against them. At the head of it was the royalist General Pichegru, who was believed to have a following of 180 deputies. The Clichy Club at Paris had become a notorious rallying-place for malcontents, and Director Carnot was patronising it in a very compromising way. On the other hand, the Constitutional Club—with Talleyrand and Constant and Mme. de Staël—could naturally be relied on to oppose a counter-revolution, little as it respected the Directorate. Napoleon, too, made it clear that his assistance could be had.

It is, however, in complete opposition to the evidence, that Lytton accuses Talleyrand of taking the initiative; and still worse is Michaud's reckless statement that Talleyrand "arranged everything." A sober inquiry into the *coup d'état* of Fructidor only discovers that Talleyrand supported it in advance, but was not implicated in the violent manner of its execution, which, indeed, he used his influence to moderate. On the information supplied to the Directors no legal action could be taken. Reveillère, whose life was threatened, then conceived the idea of acting by force, though without unnecessary severity. He approached Rewbell, who consented, and the two easily induced Barras to join. It is absurd to suppose that these officials, who hampered Talleyrand in his own department and kept him in habitual ignorance of other affairs, should do more than secure his support as a Constitutionalist. Napoleon was requested to send troops, and to these

he added as general the excitable and meddlesome Augereau, who soon had his men quartered within striking distance. The Clichy Clubbites meantime grew more audacious, and on September 3rd they warmly cheered a proposal in the Chamber to destroy the executive. That night the streets of Paris rang with the unfamiliar tread of an army, a token to all that an unconstitutional act was afoot. The next morning the two Councils found themselves surrounded by 10,000 troops. Pichegru and 42 of his followers in the Five Hundred, Barbé-Mabois and eleven of the Ancients, and 148 other alleged conspirators, especially journalists, were arrested. The Directors had warned Carnot and Barthélemy, whom they had no wish to injure personally. Carnot, who had long toyed with the Opposition, and had resisted every friendly overture, now fled. Barthélemy was arrested. Merlin de Douai, a lawyer, and Francois de Neufchateau, a literary man, took the places of Carnot and Barthélemy. The new Directorate obtained extensive powers from the newly-constituted Councils, revived the old stringent decrees against emigrants and priests, and initiated a long series of deportations. They sent 65 of the worst conspirators to Guiana—the guillotine would have been more merciful—and the rest to the Isle of Oleron. In all some 10,000 Nonconformist priests and returned royalists were prescribed, but only a proportion of these were actually banished. There was another general flight to the frontier.



CARNOT.

As I said, it is absurd to ascribe to Talleyrand a very active share in these proceedings. The charge seems to rest chiefly on the authority of Miot de Melito and Pasquier ; both are deeply prejudiced against Talleyrand (Miot de Melito had just been deposed from his embassy at Turin by the Foreign Minister), and both were hundreds of miles away from Paris at the time. It is a good instance of the levity with which the case against Talleyrand is conducted. Talleyrand was at Barras' house the night before the *coup d'état* ; so were Constant and Mme. de Staël, who, Pasquier admits, "wished the day but not the morrow." It is admitted, moreover, that Talleyrand used every effort to moderate the execution of the laws, and saved several individuals from banishment. As to the defence of the proceedings in his letter to Napoleon and his circular letter to the government agents abroad, no one will be so foolish as to seek in these an expression of his judgment. Officially he had to present the case in optimistic language or resign. The only ground for a censure is, in fact, that he did not resign ; and it would be to ascribe to Talleyrand a quite heroic degree of sensitiveness to expect him to resign on account of a procedure which Thiers soberly regards as having "prevented civil war, and substituted in its stead a stroke of policy executed with energy, but with all the calmness and moderation possible in times of revolution."

Probably one of the clearest proofs that the Directors were not much indebted to Talleyrand for their successful

extinction of the conspiracy lies in the fact that his relations with them became more strained than ever. In October the Prussian envoy wrote to his Government that Talleyrand could only retain his position "by a miracle of intelligence and conduct." Four of the Directors would not speak to him, and he was reduced almost to the position of a clerk in his department. It suits Michaud to imagine that Talleyrand took the initiative in important matters like the revolutionising of Switzerland, where there was money to be had. It is certain, however, that Talleyrand had no responsible part in forming the Roman and Helvetian Republics. In his *Éclaircissements* (July, 1799) he says he was not even present at a single discussion on the matter. On the other hand, he must have felt some satisfaction when he saw how Napoleon was ignoring the Directors. In October Napoleon concluded the treaty of Campo Formio with Austria, in complete opposition to the instructions Talleyrand had been sending him to the end of September. Talleyrand wrote him a letter of warm congratulation, which I give later. He secured the nomination of Napoleon as plenipotentiary at the subsequent Congress of Rastadt, but the instructions sent to him were always drawn up by the Directors. Talleyrand had been similarly slighted in the negotiations for peace with England. He had come into office at the time when Lord Malmesbury was conferring with the French envoys at Lille. Malmesbury was sincerely anxious to effect peace, though Talleyrand believes

Pitt had merely sent him as a blind. Talleyrand wrote a memorandum on the situation soon after his appointment, in which he pleaded for a real effort to secure peace, and suggested a tactical procedure in view of the embarrassed position of the English Government. He was called "an ass" for his pains, and was directed to replace Maret by two new envoys with inflated statements of the position and claim of France. On September 18th Malmesbury sadly recognised that peace was impossible, and returned to London. The truth was that the Directors now relied on the operations of Napoleon to fill their empty coffers and sustain their prestige.

In October of the same year (1797) occurred an event which Talleyrand's critics contemplate in a perfect luxury of moral indignation. Vice, venality, and treachery are said to be the capital offences of his career. The first charge we have considered ; the third can be appreciated only at a later stage ; the second now calls for examination. Let me indicate at once my reply to it. Talleyrand was not "venal" in the more offensive sense of the word. He never sold the interest of his country, or any humane cause. He *did* endeavour to make as much money as possible out of the Governments and princes which benefitted, or escaped injury, by his diplomatic arrangements ; but these were always in the interest of France. Further, whatever be said of diplomatic arrangements in our time, the secret transfer of money was a common association of them in

Talleyrand's day; and the transaction, being secret, was commonly exaggerated. At the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1815, Metternich and Nesselrode were accused of taking a million each from Louis XVIII. M. de Bacourt, who was in a position to know, says they "only took the *usual* diplomatic present" (boxes worth 18,000 francs each). Hangwitz is accused of being still more venal. Mirabeau and Danton had been in the secret pay of the Court. Mirabeau is even said to have taken a thousand *louis d'or* from Spain for his diplomatic recommendation in 1790. Sieyès took 400,000 francs from Napoleon for his share in making him First Consul—when, in fact, Napoleon distributed a respectable fortune. Barras was notoriously corrupt. Rewbell was implicated. Roger Ducos was bought. Pitt had been quite willing to make the Directors a secret present of ten and a half million francs (while loftily refusing to pay two million sterling) during the negotiations, and Malmesbury had on his own account tried to buy the vote of one of the Directors. Fifty blacks do not make one white. I am only pointing out that Talleyrand's conduct was not distinctive. He had far more opportunities than any other man of his time; and the actual charges against him are generally frivolous. The American "scandal" is one of the most authentic.

Adams had sent envoys to Paris in 1797 to settle the differences outstanding between the United States

and France. Instead of being invited at once to meet Talleyrand, they were visited by secret agents who hinted that they came from the Foreign Minister, and said the Directors were too angry to negotiate, but might be induced to do so. The means they indicated were, firstly, a private payment of 1,200,000 livres (£50,000) "to the Directors," and secondly, a loan from America to France* of 32,000,000 on Dutch securities that were only worth half that sum. After a number of interviews the envoys were recalled by their President, and a full account of the negotiations (without the names of the agents) was published by the United States. Talleyrand disowned his agents, but there can be no reasonable doubt that they acted on his instructions. His action provoked a widespread and deserved censure, but certain features of the transaction need to be emphasised. Talleyrand was certainly acting for Barras, though he would assuredly share the spoil. Further, the American envoys never professed the least moral resentment of the suggestion of a commission until all was over. During the negotiations they wrote home of it as being "according to diplomatic usage," and said they "might not so much regard a little money, such as he stated to be useful." No stress whatever is laid on it, "that being completely understood on all sides to be required for the officers of Government, and

* The Cambridge "French Revolution" states that they asked £50,000 for Talleyrand, and the 32 million francs for the Directors! A minor slip in the Cambridge "America" makes the agents claim 50,000 dollars "for each Director." Some of the Directors were honourable men.

therefore needing no further explanation." Their objection was solely raised against the loan, which they regarded as a kind of tribute wrung from the States. It was also this second proposal that led to the dangerous outbreak of anger and war-like preparations in the States, as the Cambridge text-book shows. It is quite clear that the suggestion of a commission alone would have done no harm, and would not have been considered unusual, except in amount, which was possibly determined by Barras.

Thus an examination of the documents published by the American Government greatly reduces the gravity of the matter. Had there been no suggestion of a loan we should never have heard of it ; and even in France the cry of "scandal" was very much confused with a perception of the very evil result of pressing the loan, which was an honest, if impolitic, attempt to trade in the interest of the nation. Sieyès wrote from Berlin to reproach Talleyrand with "trafficking in his honour." There are so many who make amends to the moral ideal by their generosity in condemning others. Mme. de Staël implored Talleyrand to exculpate himself, but he smiled. His habitual critics were, of course, delighted at so well authenticated an exposure, and to the Michauds and Sainte-Beuves of a later date this one exact documentary proof has seemed providential. So little serious notice was taken of it (apart from the loan) by sober men at the time that, when Talleyrand resigns on other grounds, in the following year, and

writes the only apologia of his life, he dismisses this in two lines.*

This American affair, of which we have such accurate information, affords a firm footing in the controversy about Talleyrand's "venality." The rest is mainly hear-say and wild conjecture, resting largely on the authority of discarded subordinates (like Miot de Melito), political opponents (like Pasquier), foreign rivals (like Roux, or Palmerston), or other people with grievances (like Napoleon in his later years). It is not usual to take such evidence at its face value. Sainte-Beuve makes a most bitter attack on Talleyrand under this head, but has little to say in detail beyond a vague statement that Talleyrand at some time or other calculated he had made sixty millions by commissions. Sainte-Beuve's reputation for scholarship and discrimination happily does not rest on his "Talleyrand." Bastide makes a more honest attempt to support his own statement that Talleyrand gained thirty millions during three years. He can, however, only swell his list of gains in detail to 14,650,000 livres, and many of the larger items are quite out of place, or wholly ridiculous.†

* Professor Sloane informs America that Talleyrand was forced to resign "in consequence of his scandalous attempt to extort a bribe from the American envoys." It is of a piece with Sloane's whole reckless reference to Talleyrand. He would have us believe that Talleyrand was from the beginning in the pay of Napoleon; and so he contrives to be ignorant of the fact that when Napoleon left Toulon for Egypt in May, 1798, *Talleyrand gave him* 100,000 francs.

† Thus, the list includes 1,500,000 made on change during the English negotiations, and 2,000,000 as a share in the prizes taken at sea. It also includes 1,000,000 from Austria for the insertion of the secret articles in

He solemnly tells us he thinks it is a sufficient guarantee for the accuracy of his items that they are found in publications of the time, and were not contradicted by Talleyrand! The biographer who takes literally every charge he finds in the pamphlets of 1789-1799, or expects to find them seriously met by men like Talleyrand, has a curious idea of his work. And the historians of our day who rely on such biographers deserve little sympathy. Michaud is more reckless than Bastide. Lady Blennerhassett has taken up his specific allegation that Talleyrand defrauded Spain of 24,000,000 livres (by concealing the reduction of its subsidy and pocketing the difference), and shown it to be impossible. The treaty with Portugal is said by some writers to have yielded Talleyrand 3,000,000; Bastide puts his profit at 1,200,000; and Michaud merely "feels sure" Talleyrand made *something* out of it. Roux declares he made 5,000,000 out of the treaty with Switzerland, and Napoleon was very liberal in his later estimates of Talleyrand's greed.

Quite certainly Talleyrand's commissions have been grossly exaggerated. The flimsiest charges and the wildest conjectures have been eagerly used against him. But he did probably make a large sum in this way whilst he was Foreign Minister. He let it be known amongst the foreign ambassadors that he expected

the Treaty of Campo Formio (on which Talleyrand had no influence whatever), and 1,000,000 from Prussia for preventing the fulfilment of these articles, and so on.

money. Mme. Grand occasionally facilitated an understanding in this sense ; Napoleon accused her of operations on her own account at times. Talleyrand despised his chiefs, and saw a very misty prospect for the future. He resolved to use his position to make some provision. However, he never sold the interest of his country, and he was, as Senfft says, "never induced to favour plans which he regarded as dangerous to the peace of Europe." Senfft tells how, on a later occasion, the Poles put 4,000,000 florins in the hands of his agent, but Talleyrand returned them when he found it impossible to do what they desired. I am not trying to show that his conduct was consistent with a strong and high character, but rebutting the exaggerated charges which lead sober historians to say, as Sloane does, that "there was never greed more dishonest than his."

This is almost the sole aspect of Talleyrand's diplomatic work under the Directory that we need consider. His splendid gifts were never utilised, the Directors employing him as little more than chief clerk of the Foreign Office. In July, 1798, he presented to them a long and very able memorandum on the situation abroad, and about that time there was some talk of his entrance into the Directorate. The Prussian ambassador wrote home that such an event would almost put an end to the convulsions of Europe. But the Directors were fixed in their fine contempt for his views, and they made diplomacy impossible. Talleyrand suffered himself

to remain the organ of their absurd conceptions until the middle of 1799. A man of his temper could tolerate the position at such a price. Meantime he lived pleasantly at the Hotel Galiffet. The authoress of the *Mémoires d'une Contemporaine* describes how he spent hours in idle talk with her at the office, and curled her hair with thousand-franc notes. But one eye was fixed all the time on a strenuous figure that was leading the armies in the south—the figure of Napoleon Buonaparte. In that direction lay the only hope for the restoration of France and of diplomacy.

CHAPTER IX

ENTER NAPOLEON

TALLEYRAND had written at once in 1797 to inform the commander of the army of Italy of his nomination to the Foreign Ministry. "Justly apprehensive," he said, "of functions of which I feel the fateful importance, I need to reassure myself by the consciousness of how much the negotiations will be facilitated by your glory. The very name of Buonaparte is an auxiliary that will remove all difficulties." He had already a dim prevision of the day when the princes of Europe would gather timidly about the dreaded figure of the Corsican and his Foreign Minister. He says that Napoleon had written to him first. This is probably untrue ; but Napoleon at once replied, and the two men immediately appreciated each other. Within a few weeks Napoleon sent him a long and curious letter containing his views on constitutional questions and popular representation. About the same time he spoke to Miot de Melito about Talleyrand in terms of high appreciation. When Napoleon closed the Austrian campaign and signed the Treaty of Campo Formio, in opposition to the instructions from Paris, Talleyrand wrote him a private letter of extravagant congratulation. "So we have peace made—and peace

à la Buonaparte. Accept my hearty compliments, General. Words could not convey all I feel just now. The Directors are satisfied, the public delighted. All is for the best. There may be some muttering from Italy, but it does not matter. Good-bye, peace-making General. Friendship, admiration, respect, gratitude—one does not know where to end.” The feeling was sincere, and Talleyrand had a way of conveying high compliments without incongruity. These early letters, Sainte-Beuve says, remind one of Voltaire’s honeymoon with Frederic.

— In December Napoleon arrived at Paris, and the two men met for the first time. Each, of course, now says that the other sought the interview. Napoleon had changed his route as he approached Paris, and was at his house in the Rue Chantierine before his arrival was known. He says that Talleyrand called at once ; but as even Josephine found his door barred and Napoleon mad with angry suspicion of her, he could not be seen that night. On the following morning Talleyrand and Mme. de Staël and a few friends waited in the Hotel Galiffet, when Napoleon, quietly dressed, pale, very silent, entered the salon. He took Talleyrand into his private room, and had a long conversation with him, and then Talleyrand introduced him to the Directors at the Luxembourg. Napoleon puzzled in a charming way the citizens of Paris. He dressed with ostentatious plainness, spoke little, and avoided public meetings and demonstrations. At the Luxembourg a splendid reception

ceremony had been prepared. The Directors sat on a dais in the court in their stagey satin clothes, lawyers and parliamentarians filled the amphitheatre, and a great orchestra and choir rendered an ode written for the occasion. Talleyrand said in his introductory speech : " When I observe all that he does to cover his glory, this classic taste for simplicity that distinguishes him, his love of abstract science, his favourite books, that sublime *Ossian* which seems to detach him from earth ; when I see his disdain for show, for luxury, for pomp, those petty ambitions of common souls—then, far from dreading what some would call his ambition, I feel that some day you may have to drag him forth from his studious retreat." Napoleon probably thanked him for keeping up the show, but may have feared he was overdoing it. They understood each other, yet really liked each other.

Talleyrand gave a magnificent festival in honour of the conqueror ; though he confesses some difficulty in finding ladies amongst the women of Paris ! As it was, the wife of one of the Directors openly observed to him : " What a lot it must have cost you, citizen-minister ! " He also induced Napoleon, though with great difficulty, to attend the anniversary of the King's execution. Napoleon did not wait long to abolish that suggestive commemoration. But the jealousy and uneasiness of the Directors made Napoleon's position uncomfortable. He began immediately to look for another field for military action. The Directors thought of Ireland as a

sufficiently remote locality, but Napoleon was better informed as to the possibility of a direct attack on England. He then unfolded to Talleyrand the plan for an invasion of Egypt, and it was laid before the Directors. The idea had occurred to one or two earlier dreamers in France, but, in spite of what Napoleon afterwards said, it is incredible that Talleyrand should have really approved it. It was certainly Talleyrand's idea that France should extend along the whole shore of the Mediterranean, and leave the high seas to England, but a leap from Marseilles to Alexandria was a different matter. However, he lent Napoleon the collection of Egyptian documents in the Foreign Office, and clearly did not oppose his plan. Miot de Melito, who was in close communication with Napoleon, and who would not lose an opportunity of blaming Talleyrand, says that Napoleon acted entirely on his own view and dragged everybody with him. Within twelve months we find Talleyrand (in his *Éclaircissements*) openly denying that he had approved the expedition.

However, the Directors yielded, and the famous fleet of 500 vessels sailed from Toulon on May 19th, 1798. Talleyrand had apparently promised to follow within twenty-four hours, to arrange matters with the Sultan at Constantinople. He was, however, ill at the time, and it is doubtful whether he ever intended to do so. If we may trust the memoirs, he saw only a personal design in the expedition at the time. Napoleon had spoken to him of founding a rich colony



BARRAS.

in Egypt, and going on to attack England in India, but he had dropped a word about returning by way of Constantinople. That was "not the way to India," nor would he be likely to leave the Sultan's throne standing, or set up a Turkish Republic, says Talleyrand. In other words he professes that he thought Napoleon wanted to found an empire in the East. All this was written, we must remember, after Napoleon's imagination had fully revealed its possibilities. The most probable reading of the situation is that Talleyrand felt, like Napoleon, that "the pear was not ripe yet;" that Napoleon had better keep out of the way for a year or two; and that something *might* come of this imposing military and scientific expedition.

In the twelve months that followed the pear ripened fast. To the chronic financial malady and political discontent was now added the news of the civil war in La Vendée and of the disastrous opening of the war against the second coalition. This was far more formidable than the first. Austria was encouraged by the absence of its conqueror, and the support of both Russia and Turkey. England was fired by the announcement of Nelson's victory at Aboukir and the apparent isolation of Napoleon. Portugal and Naples were drawn in. The first battles went badly for the French, and the Directors and Talleyrand were furiously assailed. Talleyrand thought it wise to withdraw from the Directors, and they accepted his resignation on July 20th, with some show of regret. How far he was

then informed of Napoleon's position and plans it is impossible to determine; but it is believed that the Bonapartes at Paris succeeded in communicating with Egypt. However, Talleyrand, in September, handed over his *portefeuille* to his friend, Reinhard. For the first and only time in his career (if we except his brief letter in 1791 to the *Moniteur*) he answered his critics. His "Explanations to his fellow citizens" fully destroy the frivolous charges brought against him as a minister and republican, especially by his interested predecessor, Lacroix, and the members of the Société du Manège—whom Napoleon describes as "a gang of bloodthirsty ruffians." In the end Talleyrand turns on his opponents with some dignity. "What have I done," he asks, "that such suspicions should fall on me? Is there anything in my whole life to justify such a supposition? Have I ever persecuted or been vindictive? Can any one reproach me with a single act of severity in the whole course of my ministry? Have I ever injured anyone, even by accident?" It was a just rebuke and just defence. Few of the hands raised against him were free from blood. It is also notable that the charge of corruption is not pressed. He then retired to his country house at Auteuil, to resume his familiar attitude of awaiting events.

"Those who did not live in those times," says de Broglie, "can have no idea how deep was the despondency prevailing in France between the 18th Fructidor (September 4th, 1797) and the 18th Brumaire

(November 9th, 1799)." The Directory had proved wholly unfitted to govern France. The only question in the summer of 1799 was: What shall be the next page in the constitutional history of the country? In May, Rewbell had had to retire from the Directorate, and the victorious Jacobins had replaced him by Sieyès, to whom all now turned for a lead. Sieyès found his colleagues in the way, and three of them were at once replaced by two mediocrities, Gohier and Moulin, and an active supporter, Roger-Ducos. Barras alone remained of the whole group, and he was now compromised by dallying with royalist agents. It was clear to Sieyès that the reins of Government must be put in the strong hands of a soldier, and he thought of one general after another. He was not well disposed to Napoleon, but Talleyrand made it his task to effect a reconciliation. The Buonaparte family was also very busy at Paris, preparing a reception for the General who, they said, had been sent by the Directors on this hopeless campaign in Egypt. On the 8th of October the agitation was doubled when a message was received, telling that Napoleon had landed at Frejus. He had left his army and his difficulties in charge of Kléber, had evaded the British vessels, and landed with a few of his generals on the south coast. On October 18th he arrived at Paris.

The menace of the second coalition had by this time been arrested by the victories of Masséna and the withdrawal of the Russians, but the Directorate was thoroughly discredited, and its enemies were alert

and vigorous. All parties now turned towards Napoleon with intense interest. Royalists hoped he would make himself the instrument of a restoration. The Jacobins, who had become strong again, watched such a possibility with concern. The moderates felt that it would lead to civil war. Every malcontent in Paris knew that Napoleon held the key of the situation. The only one who seemed to be unconscious of his importance was Napoleon himself. After the inevitable round of fêtes was over—and it was remarked how he drank his wine from a private bottle at the public dinner—he seemed to forget that he was a soldier. He spent most of his time at the Institut, discussing questions of science and philosophy ; and when visitors to Paris sought the great general, they had pointed out to them a quiet, pale little man in the dress of a scholar of the Institut. But his little house in the Rue de Victoire soon became the political centre of Paris. Talleyrand and Bruix (the Ex-Minister of Marine) were daily bringing members of the Councils to visit him. Presently Talleyrand reconciled him with Sieyès to a practicable extent—"you have to fill this priest to the neck with money to get anything out of him," Napoleon said afterwards—and the definite intrigue began. Napoleon would accept Sieyès' new constitution. The five Directors were to be replaced by three Consuls elected for ten years—but if he thinks I am going to be a "fatted pig" he is mistaken, said Napoleon. The Councils would be suspended for three months, and

then replaced by a Senate (with life-membership), and an elective Chamber of Deputies.

The next point was to determine the date and manner of the Revolution. The generals whom Napoleon had brought were winning over the officers, but they felt some anxiety about the soldiers, who were apprehensive of reactionary change. Talleyrand had rallied the moderates, such as Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély, Roederer, Constant, Cambacérès, Daunou, and Sémonville.* They could count on a majority in the Ancients, and Lucien Buonaparte was President of the Five Hundred. Fouché, the accommodating Minister of Police, carefully abstained from reporting to the Directors what he saw. Barras had, in fact, completely compromised himself by openly suggesting a royalist plot to Napoleon. Roger-Ducos was with Sieyès. Gohier and Moulin stupidly refused to see anything until the very last moment. The only difficulty was with the Five Hundred and the soldiers, and Napoleon could be trusted to win the latter and so crush the Council. Still it was a time of great anxiety. Talleyrand tells how Napoleon and he were discussing plans in his house in the Rue Taitbout at one o'clock in the morning, when suddenly they heard a company of cavalry gallop down the street, and halt opposite

* Napoleon speaks in his memoirs of Talleyrand dreading to meet him on account of his failure to follow him to the East, and making every effort to win his favour. It is absurd. Talleyrand knew precisely what he was worth to Napoleon. All Napoleon's later remarks on Talleyrand must be read with discrimination; many of them are obvious untruths.

Talleyrand's door. They put out the light in some concern, and crept on to the balcony to observe. It was the carriage of the manager of one of the gaming houses, returning home with the profits and an escort of gens d'armes, and it had met with an accident just before Talleyrand's door.

On the morning of November 9th (18th Brumaire) Paris awoke once more to find a revolution afoot. Great masses of troops were distributed about the streets, and a crowd of officers was gathered, by invitation, before Napoleon's house—Napoleon telling them from the balcony he was going to save the Republic. The Ancients were to meet at seven o'clock, the Five Hundred at eleven, and in fact a number of the notices to patriotic members of the latter Council had prudently gone astray in the post. Under the plea of some vague conspiracy being abroad the complaisant Ancients decreed that the legislative bodies be transferred to Saint Cloud (which was in form constitutional), that Napoleon be given command of all the troops at Paris, and that three Consuls be appointed. Napoleon and his generals (who were going to "pitch the lawyers in the river," as some of them said) at once proceeded to the Chamber and took the oath. The alarmed patriots of the Five Hundred now met, but were immediately closed by Lucien on the ground that they had been constitutionally removed to Saint Cloud. Meantime Barras was in the hands of Talleyrand, who very soon extorted his resignation. Sieyès and Ducos resigned. Gohier and Moulin



SIEYÈS.

were shut up in the Luxembourg. Fouché suspended the municipalities—it being a time of trouble. Napoleon established himself at the Tuileries. His careful and elaborate plan had so far succeeded.

On the morrow the Councils were to appoint the Consuls at Saint Cloud, and meantime a strong opposition was forming. Three of the generals were not in the plot, and one of them, Bernadotte, was an active member of the Jacobin *Société du Manège*, which at once attempted to organise a counter-revolution. The 19th Brumaire opened with not a little anxiety. Sieyès and Ducos had a coach and six at one of the gates of Saint-Cloud. Talleyrand and a few other “amateurs” (as he says) had taken a house at Saint Cloud—with two alternatives : a dinner was ordered for the evening, but a coach waited at the door. Napoleon did in fact make a terrible muddle when it came to his turn to speak. In the hall where the Ancients met he made a violent, disjointed, most imprudent speech, answering questions with the most clumsy fabrications, until Bourrienne had to drag him away with the remark : “ You don’t know what you are saying.” The Ancients, however, gave the required vote. But no sooner did Napoleon enter the hall of the Five Hundred than the deputies raged about him in crowds. He nearly fainted and had to be carried out. But his military instinct at once revived. Mounting his horse he complained to the troops that his life had been attempted ; and when Lucien came out with the news that they were outlawing him, and Sieyès

had drily answered: "Well, as they are putting you out of the law, put them out of the room," he cast off all hesitation. On the previous day when he had attempted to explain matters to Sebastiani's dragoons, who formed his escort, they curtly replied: "We don't want any explanations: black or white, we're with you." And every musket was loaded with ball. Napoleon now turned to the captain of the grenadiers and told him to "go and disperse this assembly of busy-bodies." The drums beat the charge, the grenadiers swept up the grand staircase at the double, turned into the orangery on the left with bayonets levelled, and the patriotic Five Hundred fled by the other doors, or dropped from the windows into the garden. Talleyrand and his fellow amateurs went to dinner.

That night Lucien gathered together a score or so of the more reliable elements of the Council, and passed the new Constitution. Lucien harangued his little group on the great theme of liberty and the splendid example of Rome. They declared the Directorate extinct, and borrowing again from "the free peoples of antiquity," appointed a provisional Consulate, consisting of Napoleon Bonaparte (the Italian "u" had disappeared by this time), Sieyès, and the faithful Roger-Ducos. They also proscribed 57 obnoxious deputies, and voted the thanks of the country to Napoleon for his action. So ended the French Revolution. An act of despotism, rendered possible by widespread intrigue and corruption, rang down the curtain on the ten-year drama of blind, bloody, Titanic struggles. Yet it was the best thing for France.

CHAPTER X

WAR AND DIPLOMACY

ON the morning of December 11th, 1799, Napoleon installed himself at the Luxembourg, and began at once the stupendous activity with which he was to raise France to the position of first Power in Europe. Within a fortnight Talleyrand was back at the Foreign Office, with a prospect at last of using in his correspondence that "noble language" which the Revolution and Directorate had disdained to use. Of the civilians in France, two men alone were necessary to Napoleon—Fouché and Talleyrand. Fouché was useful. Talleyrand had the additional advantage of making Napoleon bow in secret to his superior culture and finesse. In the work of the next seven years, which was to raise France higher than she had ever been in the course of her history, the soldier and the diplomatist were intimately joined. For some years it is often impossible, apart from military operations, to distinguish the action of the one from that of the other.

In the earlier years of the nineteenth century, in which the glory of Napoleon and the greatness of France generally coincide, Talleyrand had an unmistakeable regard and affection for his chief. No one more fully

appreciated the genius of Napoleon, in peace or war, and no one appraised more highly its advantage to France. He had, too, a sufficient sense of amiable cynicism to think lightly of the irony with which Napoleon brushed aside the pretentious forms of liberty and fraternity, and set up a solid but despotic system of government. With a smile he saw the country accept with an overwhelming majority the new scheme of universal suffrage. The voters of each district were to choose ten of their number ; these tens were to unite in each Department and choose ten "Notabilities of the Department ;" these were in turn to choose their tens ; and then the governing powers would select the members of the legislative bodies and the chief officials of the State. The Council (chosen by the executive) would initiate measures ; the Tribune, the really popular and able body, could discuss them (within limits), but not vote on them ; the Legislative Body could vote, but not discuss them ; and the ornate and equally silent Senate had a right of Veto. Talleyrand gave no support to Benjamin Constant when he opposed, in the name of liberty, the almost immediate introduction of the closure in the Tribune. Like most of his friends, he at once deserted Mme. de Staël's salon, because she impelled Constant to this course. Nor did he demur when Bonaparte very quickly reduced the number of journals from 73 to 13, observing (among other things) that they were making remarks that insulted "the sovereignty of the people." They had been unable to restrain their

wit over the new democracy. Talleyrand had never been a "polygarchist," to use a word which he himself calls barbarous but inevitable. In his opinion the people had proved their incompetence to rule. It was not time-serving, but real conviction, that made him encourage Napoleon's monarchical tendency.

So he passed with good spirit through the few ironic months before Napoleon departed for Italy. He was present at the first meeting of Sieyès and Napoleon. Sieyès saw clearly enough the direction of Napoleon's policy; Napoleon told him his "Grand Elector" was a *roi fainéant*, and "the time of do-nothing kings was past." They quarrelled violently and parted. At the second meeting Sieyès was more amiable. "The pike is making short work of the other fishes," said a shrewd lady to Mme. Bonaparte. By February the constitutional difficulty was over. Sieyès had disappeared, with a rich sinecure and a large estate. Ducos was submerged in the Senate. The "Grand Elector" had become "First Consul," with almost unlimited power over the military, naval, civic and foreign administration. The amiable Second and Third Consuls, Cambacérès and Lebrun, were willing to act as little more than background to Napoleon. The more heated Jacobins were banished (Talleyrand striking one of his bitterest enemies, Jarry, off the list of the proscribed). The more serious members of the old legislation were distributed over Europe in foreign embassies and consulships. The Senate was installed at the Luxembourg;

the virtuous Tribune at the Palais Egalité (a hotbed of prostitutes and gamblers); and the Consuls (though Cambacérès prudently declined the honour) at the Tuileries. Napoleon issued a proclamation to the nation, which ended: "Citizens, the Revolution is now sealed with the principles that first set it afoot. It is over." On the last day of the national mourning he had directed on account of the death of Washington, Napoleon and his colleagues drove in royal state, in a splendid carriage drawn by six white horses, to the Tuileries. They had to pass under a gate over which still lingered the inscription: "Royalty is abolished for ever in France." Talleyrand drove under it with the other ministers in advance of Napoleon. On the following day Napoleon went over his new home with his friends. "Well, Bourrienne," he said, "here we are at the Tuileries. The next thing is to see that we stop here." But he had it immediately decorated with the statues or busts of great generals and great democrats of all nations. Demosthenes, Scipio, Brutus and Mirabeau smiled or frowned on the visitor amidst a crowd of warriors and kings.

Talleyrand, who rightly believed that these changes were for the real good of France, would not be insensible to the humour of the situation or the diplomatic genius of the new head of the State. It had been decreed that ministers should discuss their portfolios every day before the three Consuls, but Talleyrand had pointed out to Napoleon on the day of his installation at the Foreign

Office (Nov. 21st, 1799) that its affairs were of a peculiarly private nature, and had proposed that he should confer with the First Consul alone. Napoleon was more than willing, and the long, close, and most fruitful co-operation of the two began. Napoleonist writers are apt to imagine that Talleyrand was little more than a clerk, as most of the other ministers were, but we shall see as we proceed that Napoleon often left even the initiative to him. Thiers observes that Fouché and Talleyrand were the only ministers who were not effaced by the phenomenal activity of Napoleon. His vast intelligence was already at work on plans for beautifying Paris, improving the roads of the country, restoring financial soundness, creating a system of education, reviving industry, formulating a code of laws, and effecting a hundred other improvements. A royalist visitor who saw Napoleon at the time said that he looked like a well-dressed lackey—until you met his eye. That eye was now searching Paris through and through for means of consolidating his position ; it was sweeping over the broad provinces of France in search of disorders to remedy and dangers to crush : it was following royalists and Jacobins into exile, scanning the countenances of kings and statesmen abroad, counting their ships and forces, turning from East Indies to West Indies, from St. Petersburg to Cairo and Persia. In Fouché he had a political detective, unhampered by the faintest sense of moral principle, who could answer for Paris. Gradually relaxing the laws against the emigrants, he

threw open the career to all talent, excepting only the militant royalists and the most violent Jacobins. Priests were now only required to promise, not to swear allegiance; large numbers of emigrants were struck off the list on one pretext or other, though the peasants were at the same time assured that not a franc's worth of emigrant or ecclesiastical property would be restored; and all were promptly put under the searchlight of the Ministry of Police. Even Jacobins were in time absorbed. Talleyrand saw one leave Napoleon's room one day, and expressed surprise at it. "You don't know the Jacobins," said Napoleon. "There are the salty Jacobins and the sugary Jacobins. That one is a salty Jacobin. I do what I like with those. They have to be arrested sometimes, but a little money soon manages that. But the sugary Jacobins! They would destroy twenty governments with their metaphysics."

As long as such a man would leave the choice of language to Talleyrand the diplomatic combination would be superb. They got quickly to work. The year 1799 had hardly closed, London was still wondering what this new phase of French politics portended, when George III. received an edifying invitation from the First Consul to entertain a project of peace. In flawless and dignified language he was urged to reflect before plunging Europe once more into the horrors of war. "The fate of all civilised nations," the letter concluded, "cries for the termination of a war that embraces the whole world." Pitt replied—or, rather,



From an engraving, after the picture by Delaroche.

NAPOLEON.

sent a note to Talleyrand at the Foreign Office—that England saw no guarantee of stability in French policy until the legitimate ruler of the country was restored. It is generally agreed that this was an egregious blunder, an arrogant and tactless attempt to dictate to the French nation. It was, at all events, immediately recognised as such in France, and the people were more than reconciled to a continuation of the war with England. Talleyrand gravely enquired of Lord Grenville what England would say to a proposal to restore the Stuarts. Napoleon had written at the same time and in the same vein to the Emperor of Austria. “A stranger to every sentiment of vain glory, my first desire is to arrest the shedding of blood.” Austria replied to Talleyrand, as England had done, though less offensively, asking for guarantees of stability. The reply to Austria indicates clearly enough that, as Talleyrand writes, Napoleon did not want peace. They were asked to take the Treaty of Campo Formio (framed when Austria was in a much worse position) as the base of negotiation.

In both cases the correspondence soon came to a futile close. Napoleon had reached the steps of the throne as a military commander, and new victories would at least sustain his prestige. Moreover, the financial condition of France was very low, and Napoleon had had experience of the precuniary value of victorious warfare. His letters and the first replies (ignoring his official position) strengthened his support in the country, and in fact, as Talleyrand observes, made him out to be

“something of a statesman.” He turned cheerfully to the rest of his diplomatic task before proceeding to face Austria. By tactful action in the western provinces he put an end to the civil war there, induced the Vendean leaders to come to Paris, and actually attached some of them to his service. The next important step was to detach Russia from Austria, secure the neutrality of, if not an alliance with, Prussia, and have a good understanding with Spain. The King of Prussia was not unwilling to see France and Austria exhaust themselves in a long conflict, while he himself could continue in peace to strengthen his finances and his army. Duroc was sent to inform him of the change of Government in France, and soon afterwards Talleyrand sent his friend General Beurnonville, an enemy of Austria, to fill the embassy at Berlin. Through Prussia an attempt was to be made to reach the Tsar. Very soon Prussia ceased to talk of the Rhine provinces, and reported that the opposition to France at St. Petersburg was relaxing. Napoleon suspected that Prussia was maintaining too long the profitable rôle of mediator, and urged a direct appeal to Russia. Hearing that the Tsar had seriously quarrelled with Austria, and was not well disposed towards England, he collected all the Russian prisoners he had, re-clothed them, and sent them home with military honours. When he further sent the sword of La Valette to the Tsar (who had been appointed Grand Master of the Order of St. John, and had an enthusiasm for his charge) and invited him to take possession of

Malta (then very precariously held by the French against the English), the Tsar was won.

In the meantime the French Minister at Madrid had reported on the situation in Spain. A boorish, thoughtless king, who gave the slightest possible attention to public affairs : a spirited, hard-working queen, with an eye for Parisian millinery : a conceited and incompetent paramour of the queen, Godoy, who was in reality the first minister of the country. In a few weeks cases of valuable French arms were on their way to Godoy. The king, innocent of the vaguest suspicion of political machinery, desired some for himself. A splendid assortment was at once dispatched ; and Citoyenne Minette was sent to the queen, with boxes of exquisite Parisian costumes, chosen by Josephine, and with diplomatic instructions from Talleyrand in her pocket.

By the beginning of May Napoleon was ready to open the campaign against Austria. He had set in motion his vast plans for the improvement of Paris and the country, and the restoration of commerce, education, justice, and order. He had pacified la Vendée, and set free the troops for the campaign in Italy. Russia was detached from the coalition, and had sent an ambassador to Paris—a man with whom it would be easy to deal, said Talleyrand, because he had no instructions, and was incensed against his own government. Prussia was most benevolently neutral. Spain seemed to have entirely forgotten Louis XVI. Leaving Talleyrand to sustain

the good disposition of these Powers, Napoleon set out on May 6th for Italy. "What we want now," said Talleyrand to him, "is for success in war to put new life into the department of peace."

Within six weeks came the news of the victory at Marengo. By July 3rd Napoleon was back in the capital. Austria was crushed, Italy won, and England isolated. A new phase of diplomatic work had now to begin. From the battle-field Napoleon had written to the Austrian Emperor. The Emperor injudiciously sent his reply by the same messenger, a very undiplomatic Austrian soldier, the Count St. Julien, who followed Napoleon to Paris, and was entrusted to Talleyrand to deal with. He had, of course, no power whatever to negotiate, but was instructed to sound the French, and only say sufficient for that purpose about Austria's disposition. Within a week St. Julien signed the preliminaries of a treaty with France that bound Austria to close her ports against England (with whom she had signed an agreement one month before). The inexperienced soldier had asked Talleyrand's advice as to the extent of his powers, and Talleyrand gravely replied that if he were in St. Julien's place he would sign. When Napoleon heard that St. Julien was disavowed and sent to a fortress, and the negotiations were annulled, he said that he rather expected it, but merely "wanted to put the Emperor in the wrong in the eyes of Europe." He talked of renewing hostilities, but Talleyrand dissuaded him, and in October Count Cobentzl reached Paris for

the serious work of negotiation. In the meantime the effect of Marengo was visible on all sides. A succession of fêtes brought Paris and France to the feet of the First Consul. Millions were sent to the Treasury from the seat of war.

Cobentzl was to treat with Joseph Bonaparte at Lunéville, but Napoleon invited him to pay a visit to Paris first. On the evening of his arrival Talleyrand took him to the Tuileries. Napoleon had prepared the very furniture of the room to receive him. Cobentzl, with distinct recollection of the violent little man who had smashed his porcelain to illustrate how he would break Austria, found himself admitted into the large room on the ground floor where Napoleon worked. The lustre was unlit. One small lamp shone on the desk in the far corner where Napoleon sat, and Cobentzl found, after crossing the long dark room, that all the chairs had been removed except the one that Napoleon used. He was nervous and uncomfortable, while Napoleon conducted his well-rehearsed part with the ease of a conqueror. The few days in Paris were not pleasant to the Austrian envoy. He gladly moved to Lunéville to treat with the less dramatic and less violent Joseph. Napoleon's brother had already been used in the conclusion of a treaty with the United States. It is absurd to say that Talleyrand was passed over in these matters for personal reasons. Napoleon's employment of his elder brother, who had no mean ability, in these high affairs of State requires no explanation. On

February 9th, 1801, the new treaty was signed at Lunéville. Austria was restricted to Venice in Italy, and lost the Rhine provinces and the Netherlands. Talleyrand did little more than conduct the correspondence between the two brothers. Count Cobentzl had made every effort to escape a rupture with England by signing a separate peace, but the supervention of the victory of Hohenlinden in December had too utterly enfeebled his country.

An event had occurred in December in connection with which Talleyrand is often severely censured. An attempt had been made by certain *chouans* to blow up the First Consul as he went to the opera. Napoleon at once called a Council of State, and declared it was the work of the Jacobins. Whatever the suspicions of the Councillors were, they knew that Napoleon was bent on making this a pretext for a severe blow at the Terrorists, and they said nothing when a number of the more truculent were executed and deported for a crime that was afterwards found to be the work of Royalists. There was much indignation against Fouché for the negligence of the police. Mr. Holland Rose says that "if we may credit the *on dit* of Pasquier, Talleyrand urged the execution of Fouché." We may *not* credit the *on dits* of Pasquier when they reflect on Talleyrand; and such a suggestion is entirely inconsistent with Talleyrand's character. It seems to be stated with more authority (though the reports are not consistent) that Talleyrand—probably at the instigation

of Napoleon — advocated taking action on a *senatus-consultum*, which would dispense with the need of passing measures through the less complaisant bodies. Talleyrand said at the time that it was necessary to give foreign governments one of those guarantees of stability about which they were so anxious. There were few tears shed over the brutal and hasty treatment of the remnant of the Terrorists.

In those early years Talleyrand felt a lively personal attachment to Napoleon. "The sentiment that attaches me to you," he writes, "my conviction that the devotion of my life to your destiny and to the grand views that inspire you is not without effect in their realisation, have made me take more care of my health than I have ever done before." Later, when Napoleon had rendered some service to his family: "I am with you in life or death." His letters up to 1804 frequently exhale an odour that the British perception would class as that of rank flattery. Making due allowance for the exaggerated manners of the day, the sentiment seems to be sincere. The allusions of Napoleonists in later years to "an Auteuil conspiracy" (where Talleyrand had a house) early in the nineteenth century are frivolous. Talleyrand would, no doubt, shudder at the coarseness of Napoleon's language at times and cannot have been blind to his ambition. But the latter coincided as yet with the interest of France, and the former was almost obliterated in the glare of his genius. When we consider the vast work that Napoleon was doing

for France, and the very probable effect a restoration of the King at that period would have had, we feel that Talleyrand must have clung to him with real anxiety.

On the other hand, Napoleon would take care to attach to his person and cause a minister of the ability of Talleyrand. To the end of his career he acknowledged that Talleyrand had no equal in his work, and their letters show that "foreign ministry" was taken in a wide sense. Talleyrand could entertain returned nobles who despised the thin polish of the Tuileries, as well as play with a St. Julien, or conciliate Swiss and Italian patriots. To one letter Talleyrand appends a list of the ladies at his last *sorée* who did not dance. When the Spanish princes came to Paris, it was Talleyrand's *fête* at Neuilly that remained in their memories; it was at Neuilly they met the old nobility and culture of France, and enjoyed the most brilliant display of Parisian decorative art. When Napoleon wanted to have himself appointed President of the Italian Republic it was Talleyrand he sent to meet the 450 stern Italian patriots at Lyons, who would not venture nearer into the mesmeric circle of the Tuileries. Talleyrand describes the state of the roads, the price of bread and the feeling of the provincials, as he travels; selects his friend Melzi among the deputies to "open his heart to"; puts before them in his grave, sententious way "not what Napoleon desired, but what it was expedient for the Cisalpine



TALLEYRAND
(Under Napoleon).

Republic to ask."* When Napoleon and Josephine arrived, it was almost superfluous to awe the Italians with reviews and parades. The Constitution was accepted, and the Italian branch of Napoleon's empire created. When, in the summer of 1801, Spain made its "orange-war" on Portugal, instead of subjugating it as Napoleon had demanded, the First Consul sent the whole of the papers to Talleyrand who was at the baths of Bourbon l'Archambault. "I fear my advice has a smack of the douche and cold bath about it," says Talleyrand in reply; but his moderate and judicious scheme saved the angry Napoleon from a serious blunder. The news of Spain's interested failure to close Portugal against England had come to Napoleon in the midst of his negotiation for peace with London, and he talked of making war on Spain. Talleyrand urged the more refined punishment of disposing of Trinidad to England, sending Lucien (the Madrid ambassador) on a long visit to Cadiz, and of generally "wasting time at Madrid and pushing things on at London."

Peace with England was, in fact, the next measure that the interest of France demanded. In March, 1801,

* Lady Blennerhassett misses the subtlety of the distinction when she suggests that Talleyrand attempted to play a double game with Napoleon on this occasion. Compare Mr. Holland Rose's version: "Talleyrand took the most unscrupulous care that the affair of the Presidency should be judiciously settled." Standing between the two I should say he took most "scrupulous care" to have Napoleon's wish realised. The full passage in the memoirs runs: "Je m'ouvris à Melzi, non pas sur ce que le Premier Consul désirait, mais sur ce qu'il fallait que la République Cisalpine demandât. En peu de jours je parvins à mon but. Au moment que Bonaparte arriva à Lyons, tout était préparé, &c."

overtures were made from England. Pitt had fallen over the Catholic Emancipation proposals, and the new ministry under Addington desired to close the war. Now that Napoleon had crushed Austria, cajoled Spain, and conciliated Russia, he would prefer to attempt a blow at his great enemy, but the news from abroad moderated his ambition. From St. Petersburg came the announcement that the Tsar had "died of apoplexy." He had been murdered in a palace-conspiracy on March 23rd. Napoleon vented his feelings in the customary rhetoric. Talleyrand lifted his eyebrows and said, "Apoplexy again? It is time they invented a new disease in Russia." Immediately afterwards came the report of the English victory at Copenhagen, and the detachment of Denmark; and about the same time bad news reached Paris from Egypt. Shortly afterwards Bonaparte is described by Stapfer as saying to the British Ambassador at Paris: "There are only two nations in the world, England and France. Civilisation would perish without them. They must be united."

One cannot claim that Talleyrand did much more than clerical work in the negotiations that led to the Peace of Amiens, though he entered into it with more than usual ardour. Napoleon's temporary and insincere cry for a peaceful co-operation of the Mistress of the Sea and the Mistress of the Land expressed Talleyrand's habitual feeling*. He did desire to see a naval

* Yet M. Olivier, in his attack on Talleyrand (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, September, 1894), complains of him deserting the English Alliance under Napoleon.

supremacy of France in the Mediterranean, but he would leave the high seas to England, with a hope that free trade would still favour France's commerce and colonising adventures. It was, therefore, with a real sense of triumph that he saw France conclude a most advantageous peace at a moment when a change of policy seemed possible in Russia. Joseph Bonaparte again conducted the negotiations. The preliminaries were signed on October 1st, 1801, and the Treaty of Amiens was ratified on March 27th. England had imprudently relied on certain verbal promises of Otto in signing the preliminaries, and these were, of course, disavowed by Talleyrand. "Make plenty of promises but put nothing on paper," is a very frequent charge from him and Napoleon to envoys. The integrity of Portugal was guaranteed. Egypt was assigned to the Turks, and Malta to the Knights of St. John. France gave to England the islands of Trinidad and Ceylon (which did not belong to her), and obtained recognition of her extension into Italy and Germany. The diplomatic reputation of the Bonapartes and Talleyrand rose to a great height at Paris, where the advantages gained were discussed with astonishment. As Mr. Rose puts it: "With three exceptions England had given way on every point of importance since the first declaration of her claims."

Towards the close of March Talleyrand presented himself to Napoleon one morning for the usual discussion of business. When it was all over he calmly

produced the Treaty of Amiens! But he was far from insensible of the height to which France had risen since the end of 1799. The flood of allied armies that had dashed against her frontiers for seven or eight years had now ebbed impotently away. Her territory reached to more natural boundaries, and her influence was felt far beyond them—in Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. There seemed some hope at last of that internal organisation which France so sorely needed. And Bonaparte's ideal went very largely on the lines of Talleyrand's own schemes. His great address on education was exhumed; his financial proposals were followed more than once in the restoration of fiscal health to the country. Nor would Talleyrand have any sympathy with the opposition to Napoleon's creation of the Legion of Honour. "Toys!" said Napoleon, when someone spoke lightly of his distribution of ribands: "Well, you keep men in order with toys." It was a not unhappy mean between the old hereditary gradation of society, with its demoralising and irritating narrowness, and the crude "equality" of the Revolution.

When, therefore, the proposal of a life Consulship was put before Paris by Napoleon's instruments, Talleyrand had no reason to demur to it. The benevolent despot was his ideal of government for France. Besides, who *could* succeed Napoleon? Who else could give form and substance to the fair vision of France that had arisen before the minds of thoughtful men? To talk

of Talleyrand "deserting" the principles of the Revolution which he had embraced is mere verbiage. He had never believed that pure democracy would be permanent or practicable in an uneducated nation. There did not seem to him on that account any reason why he should sit idly beyond the frontiers, living on an English pension, until others would lead France again into the paths of destiny. So when Cambacérès hinted that the work of the First Consul merited a peculiar recognition, he felt no repugnance. The obsequious Senate proposed a Consulship for ten years, and Napoleon disdainfully ignored it. Then the idea of a life-Consulship was put to the country in a plebiscite, and carried by an imposing majority.

In the long and complete negotiations that followed the peace Talleyrand was very active. His detractors had the alternative of ignoring his action altogether, and reducing him to the inglorious rank of first clerk of the Foreign Office, or of assigning to him a very considerable activity with a proportionate "corruption." The truth is that during 1802-3 Talleyrand was very busy, and his work was lucrative. Once more, however, there is no charge that he sold the interest of France or of peace. In those last days of the buccaneering period the great Powers regarded helpless little States as a providential means of compensating each other. Poland had been coldly dismembered. Turkey in Europe was freely subjected to plans, as it still is. Holland, Hanover, and a score of other places were pawns on the board. It

was understood that after the peace the possessions of the ecclesiastical princes on the Rhine should be put on the market. The hotel of the Foreign Minister at Paris was besieged with princes and their envoys. Baron von Gagern tells how he saw Luchesini, Cobentzl, and others playing with Talleyrand's adopted daughter, Charlotte, and her lap-dog.

Prussia was the first to be rewarded for her benevolent neutrality and her silence in view of the invasion of Italy. Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Hesse, Baden, and the House of Orange were indemnified out of ecclesiastical property. Vienna saw its legendary "empire" break up without the power of murmuring. Austria itself and the Grand Duke of Tuscany absorbed more of the ecclesiastical domains. The cession of the left bank of the Rhine to France had created the need for indemnities. France, with the ready consent of Europe, covered her aggression by dividing the right bank among the dispossessed princes and the Powers. At the Hotel Galiffet and at St. Cloud the map of Europe was assiduously used. Little squares of territory with few guns and troops changed colour rapidly. There were believed to be men and women in them.

Then there were the southern odd parts of the map to be settled. Switzerland had invited the interference of a strong hand by her constant anarchy. Napoleon was not unwilling to play the part of mediator, and clip off the province containing the road to Italy. The sturdy Swiss patriot, Stapfer, has left us the long

correspondence with which he reported to his authorities the dreary two years he spent at Paris. In one of his letters he says to Talleyrand: "I shall feel gratified and honoured throughout life that I have been in touch with you who have brought the light and the urbanity of the old regime into the new, and who have proved that all the results of social advance and of the culture of the first ranks of society may be completely reconciled with democratic principles." It is just to add that this is a prelude to a very solid "but." However, Stapfer acknowledged in the end that Napoleon's mediation in Switzerland had done good. Luchesini tells us that when Napoleon asked Talleyrand to secure his nomination to the presidency of the Swiss Republic, as he had done with the Italians at Lyons, the Foreign Minister at once threatened to resign. Piedmont had been incorporated as a French province by a *senatus consultum* in September. Genoa and Lucca had been granted "constitutions." Elba had sent three deputies to Paris, where they were entertained as princes and given a *douceur* of 3,000 francs each ; and Elba was incorporated into the growing empire.

In two years the Foreign Office had negotiated treaties with Austria, Russia, Prussia, Bavaria and England, redistributed all the small principalities of the Rhine valley, and prepared constitutions for Lucca, Genoa, Elba, Piedmont and Switzerland. Many princes, provinces and free towns gained by the changes: many escaped losses that seemed only too imminent:

many lost less than they might have done. It is probable enough that Talleyrand accepted from these sums of money that were collectively respectable. A few cases are put on reliable record. There is not the least reason to doubt that in most cases of advantage conferred the Foreign Minister was ready to receive money. He freely expressed his disposition. *Cadeau diplomatique* was a familiar and not dishonourable phrase of the day. "I have given nothing to St. Julien," Talleyrand wrote to Napoleon, "because all the Directory jewellery is out of date." On another occasion he urges Napoleon to give a substantial sum of money to the Spanish Minister. No doubt, the present usually took the form of a piece of jewellery *worth* money. "Talleyrand preferred cash," says von Gagern, indulgently. It saved trouble. When we regard the enormous quantity of negotiations and settlements thrown on Talleyrand by Napoleon's plans, it is difficult to feel surprise that he made some millions of francs. His action does not invite our admiration, but we may bear in mind that in not a single case is he known to have strained or deserted his duty for money, and that more than half the specific charges against him will not sustain examination.

To complete the picture of the extraordinary activity of Napoleon and Talleyrand at this time we must notice its range beyond Europe. Treaties were concluded with Turkey, Algeria and Tunis. Napoleon's mind found time to interest itself in Australia, India, America and the West Indies. After the peace of

Amiens he took up the idea of colonies as "safety valves" for the over-strained and over-populated nation which Talleyrand had put forward under the Directory. But Talleyrand seems to have been little more than a clerk in the not very honourable pursuit of this plan. Napoleon sent out his ill-fated army to St. Domingo with a message to Toussaint l'Ouverture that it was coming to help him. At the same time he directed Talleyrand to inform England that it was going to destroy the native government, and hint that it might restore the slave trade ; while Bruix and others were pointing out to the dazed new democracy in France that slavery had been fully recognised by those admirable models of theirs, the "free peoples of antiquity." In 1801 he made Talleyrand assure Spain that Louisiana, which Spain ceded to him, would never be given to a third Power. It is on record that Talleyrand firmly opposed him when he unscrupulously sold it to the United States two years later. Expeditions to India and to Australia complete the gigantic programme of their activity, save for the important work of reconciliation with Catholicism which may open a new chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE RESTORATION OF RELIGION

NAPOLÉON's imperial vision included in its first vague outline the restoration of the Church in France and the establishment of good relations with Rome. The sharpness of his earlier antagonism to religion was worn down by his experience and his political requirements. Let the old clergy overrun the provinces of France again, and they would soon exorcise them of their superficial Jacobinism. He had seen in the East how despotism thrived where it had the support of religion. The new Pope, Pius VII, should be disposed to make a bargain with the new Charlemagne. Not only did France seem still to drift away from Catholicism, but the spirit of Gallicanism had passed over the Rhine and the Pyrenees. Alarming rumours of the founding of "national" churches came to the Vatican from Spain and South Germany; while Catholic Austria held aloof with an open cupidity for the Pope's temporal dominions. So the Corsican free-thinker converted himself into "Charlemagne." The Pope might be reminded of the spiritual desolation that cried for his spiritual intervention in France; ultramontanism could be made innocuous by the simple expedient of abolishing the mountains, and making a Catholic Constantinople of

Paris ; the police would be seconded by the subtler gendarmery of the clergy, the heads of which would be ingeniously fitted into the political machinery of the country. Before Napoleon left Italy (after Marengo) he sent the Bishop of Vercelli to the Pope with a message of peace.

Talleyrand had already written to the Vatican in the same feeling, at the direction of the First Consul. Mr. Holland Rose and many other writers entirely misunderstand Talleyrand's share in the work of religious pacification, because they have a quite false idea of his attitude towards the Church. I interpret the negative evidence to mean that Talleyrand was agnostic rather than deistic, in spite of his admiration for Voltaire and his dislike of Diderot and d'Holbach. But he was an agnostic Liberal statesman of a type familiar in France (and many other countries) down to our own time. He never attacked or ridiculed religion. He believed the Church to be a useful agency among the mass of the people, provided it was earnest and spiritual, and did not meddle with politics beyond promising eternal torment to the more violent radicals. Of this we have evidence enough even in his speeches of 1790-1792. He would not at all resent Napoleon's proposals, if Napoleon would firmly maintain the rights of the constitutional clergy. There is not a particle of evidence that raises any difficulty as to Talleyrand's attitude.*

* Contrast with Mr. Rose's opinion that of E. Ollivier, a violent modern critic : " He threw himself with equal zeal into the negotiation of the Concordat."

He is nowhere found with the angry soldiers and politicians who thought the revolution had made a French Church an anachronism, and who filled Paris with fresh murmurs at the idea of a Concordat.

Towards the end of 1800, Paris had a new fact to proceed on in its cafés. The Vatican had sent Mgr. Spina, the Papal Nuncio at Florence, to confer with Talleyrand and Napoleon. The sagacious priest did not flaunt his purple, merely announcing that the Archbishop of Corinth had come to treat with Napoleon on matters concerning the administration of Rome. But the religious controversy had revived in France, and the appearance of a papal envoy fanned the flame. The relaxation of the laws had introduced a large number of the emigrant clergy, and these contended everywhere with the Constitutionalists for the care of souls and of presbyteries. The confusion was increased by the Theophilanthropists, who claimed the sacred edifices of the country in the superior name of virtue, and asked the people to bow to their august abstractions. After a mass they would decorate Catholic altars with flowers in honour of morality, and they showed no lack of courage in defending their fair ideals. Philosophic deists and quick-witted atheists smiled on the confusion. But all eyes were now centred on the pale and portly prelate who sat in long conference with the ex-bishop at the Foreign Office.

Mgr. Spina had been generally directed to avoid the excommunicated apostates, but to moderate the

rigour of the Canon Law when "urbanity" demanded. "Urbanity" clearly involved amiable relations with Talleyrand, and the suave, serious tone of the diplomatist at once disarmed the Italian. Talleyrand would "very soon return to the Church," Spina wrote to Rome. Napoleon, however, had another agent at hand for this negotiation. He had retained the Breton priest, Bernier, at Paris, and now used him as a foil against the astute Italian. The Pope's temporal possessions, the Legations, were the central difficulty in the negotiations that followed. Pius VII was pledged to work for their restoration; Napoleon had no intention whatever of restoring them. Talleyrand clearly stated this position, and then allowed the abbé and the archbishop to expend their diplomatic talent over the *impasse* for a month or two. At last a draft of a Concordat was submitted to Rome, the First Consul sending with it the unexacting but precious present of the wooden statue of Our Lady of Loretto, which the revolutionary troops had brought from Italy, and telling his envoy to "treat the Pope as if he had 200,000 soldiers." It was an original standard of spiritual respect.

But Talleyrand's interest in the constitutional clergy of France—Napoleon is reported to have called them "a pack of dishonourable brigands"—found expression in the Concordat. The Pope was requested to secure the resignation of the orthodox emigrant bishops, so as to begin the foundation of the new church on a clear ground. The unhappy Pope was forced at length to ask

this resignation, and the emigrant clergy cast off all restraint, and a good deal of theology, when the invitation reached them. While forty-five of them agreed to do so a large number sent a fiery and defiant reply to the Pope. Pamphlets circulated at London and at Rome in which priests described Pius VII as a Jew, or Judas, and declared it to be blasphemy to mention his name in the mass. The prospects of Catholicism in England had to be reassured by a counter fulmination from twenty-nine Irish Catholic Bishops and English Vicars Apostolic. At the same time the Pope was told that he must sanction the national appropriation of the estates of the Church in France. "The difficulties you raise," Talleyrand wrote to Rome, "are imaginary. The Church has been stripped of her possessions in every age, and the despoilers have never been touched—unless weak." And as the Vatican still lingered over these formidable demands Napoleon angrily summoned Talleyrand, Bernier, and Spina to Malmaison, formulated his ultimatum, and declared that if Rome did not comply within five days he would throw it over and erect a national Church.

On the fifth day the Pope's Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, was in Paris. He had left Rome placarded with the florid denunciations of the Pope by the emigrant bishops; he found Paris holding a congress of the constitutional bishops, who denounced the Concordat with equally lively rhetoric from their own point of view. The Pope was profoundly dejected and

miserable ; the First Consul was radiantly surveying the universe from the height of success ; Talleyrand was wearying of the futile resistance of the Romans. Consalvi brought every weapon from the diplomatic arsenal of the Vatican. Thinking he understood Talleyrand, he said to him : " People make me out to be a pietist. I'm nothing of the kind. I like pleasure as well as anyone." But Talleyrand did not admire Consalvi's diplomacy. After a few days he sent him a final draft of a Concordat, and left Paris to take the waters at Bourbon l'Archambault. Mr. Holland Rose puts it that " the polite scoffer, the bitter foe of all clerical claims, found it desirable to take the baths at a distant place, and left the threads of the negotiation in the hands of two men who were equally determined to prevent its signature." I have already pointed out that Talleyrand never scoffed at religion, and was not at all a foe, " bitter " or otherwise, of clerical claims of a non-political character. Further, Talleyrand left Paris, firstly, because it was his custom to go to the baths about this time, and secondly because he *wanted* the Concordat signed without further palaver. As a fact, Consalvi expressed satisfaction that Talleyrand was out of the way at the moment of signing. Talleyrand, again, was bound to leave his functions in the charge of d'Hauterive, his second in command, and the belief that d'Hauterive was " equally determined to prevent signature " is an equally unjust inference from the mere fact of his being an ex-cleric. In fine, the story

that the chiefs of the Foreign Office tried to trick Consalvi into signing a draft materially differing from the one they had given him, is only mentioned by Consalvi, and has been gravely questioned by some writers.*

The Concordat was signed by Consalvi and Joseph Bonaparte on the night of July 15-16. Consalvi admitted to his friends that he had been empowered to make even greater concessions than he had been forced to do, and attributed his comparative success to the absence of Talleyrand. But before he left Paris Talleyrand returned from the south, and at once pointed out to Napoleon the unsatisfactory features of the Concordat. The chief of these was that it contained no recognition of the constitutional clergy or of the married and secularised ex-priests. Rome was just as eager to ignore or punish these as Talleyrand was to defend them ; and the First Consul was inclined to sacrifice them to the general agreement. But Talleyrand insisted on a recognition of their status ; it is in this connection that Consalvi describes him as a "powerful opponent," not with the implication that he is a "bitter foe" of clerical claims generally. Consalvi again fruitlessly struggled against the Foreign Minister. On August 29th Talleyrand was able to report to Napoleon that "the Holy See had sanctioned, without any material reserve, the results of the negotiations of its ministers—had, in fact, done

* See M. Crétineau-Joly's *Bonaparte et le Concordat*.

more, as it had given the name of bishops and archbishops to the titular prelates of the constitutional clergy." He had threatened that France would not ratify the convention if the Vatican attempted to stigmatise in any way the clergy or ex-clergy of the country, but he permitted it the luxury of referring to their wives as "corrupt women," and was content to suppress, as far as possible, the Brief containing the phrase.

The Concordat became law in April, 1802. The only people who murmured against it were, says Talleyrand, "a few soldiers—very brave fellows, but with minds too narrow to admit a conception of that kind." The phrase clearly indicates his view of it. Broad-mindedness and a desire for peaceful social advance recommended the measure. It put an end to the unseemly squabble over churches and presbyteries, and ended the ridiculous confusion of the Republican day of rest (*décadi*—every ten days) and the Sabbath. It reconciled the Catholic feeling that still existed in the country (though this is sometimes grossly exaggerated) with the Napoleonic regime. Talleyrand would be the last to wish to sacrifice these solid advantages to a sentimental rationalism. He is one of the chief architects and builders of the Concordat.

A few months after the ratification of the Concordat Talleyrand was "secularised" by the Pope. This procedure has somewhat mystified his biographers, and as a fact it was a mere empty form, another concession of the Vatican to the perversity of the age. On

Catholic principles the Pope *cannot* annul the priestly character ; he *may* release the priest from his vow of celibacy. Pius VII affected to do the former, but cleverly refrained from doing the latter, for Talleyrand. His letter, dated June 29th, 1802, and addressed to "our very dear son," ran : "We were overjoyed at learning of your ardent desire to be reconciled with us and the Catholic Church. Hence, extending our fatherly love to you, we relieve you, in the fulness of our power, from the bond of all the excommunications, and grant you liberty to wear secular costume and to administer all civil affairs, whether in the office you now fill or in others to which your Government may call you." The statement that Talleyrand thought this secularisation would leave him free to marry, and had asked for it, is ridiculous. The Vatican has only annulled the priestly vow of celibacy twice in the course of its history, though it professes to have full power to do so in any case. It was Napoleon who asked the Pope to secularise Talleyrand. Excommunications sat lightly enough on the ex-bishop ; and he would, no doubt, keenly appreciate the "paternal charity" of the Pope in "reconciling" him by removing his excommunication and gravely admitting him to secular employment, while carefully refraining from noticing his notorious domestic relations and his infidelity.

Napoleon, apparently, had a large idea of the privileges he had secured for Talleyrand, and he presently put great pressure on him to marry Mme. Grand.

Talleyrand does not seem to have cared at all for going through the meaningless ceremony. He knew he was not free to marry from the ecclesiastical point of view, and a civil contract would not in any case alter his relations to the lady of his choice. However, Mme. Grand felt that the form of marriage would improve her position. The etiquette of the Tuileries was developing once more. There was, one observer says, "not exactly a Court, but no longer a camp." She appealed to Napoleon through Josephine, and Talleyrand was forced to go through the ceremony of marriage. The civil function was performed on September 10th, 1803, and the Church graciously blessed the diplomatic marriage on the following day. In the spiteful mood of later years Napoleon spoke of the marriage he had himself brought about as a "a triumph of immorality." He seems to have discovered at St. Helena that in Catholic eyes a priest is "a priest for ever" ; and he contrives to forget that Mme. Grand was not a "married woman" but a *divorcée*.* The story runs that the first time she appeared at a levee after the marriage the Emperor thought fit to express a hope that "the good conduct of Citoyenne Talleyrand would help them to forget the escapades of Mme. Grand." She replied that, with the example of Citoyenne Bonaparte before her, she would do her best.

By this time the heavy diplomatic work that followed the treaties of Lunéville and Amiens was over, and the

* As described in the civil registry of marriage at the time.

Talleyrand

German princes had ceased (for the time) to struggle for the debris of the Holy Roman Empire. Talleyrand found himself in a position of great wealth, and with one or two years of comparative leisure. His official residence, a large mansion built under the old regime by a rich colonist, was the Hotel Galiffet in the Rue St. Dominique. He had wandered far since the day when he began his public life in a small house of the same street in 1778, but the tense experiences of those fifteen years had made little change in him. The Revolution and the exile might never have occurred. His principles were unchanged, his wit as keen as ever, his light cynicism not a shade less amiable, his fine taste for books, for food, or for society unimpaired. Lytton describes him at this time reclining, day by day, on a couch near the fire in his salon* and entertaining a brilliant circle of visitors. His chief Parisian friends at this time were Montrond, the Duc de Laval, Sainte-Foix, General Duroc, Colonel Beauharnais, Louis, Dalberg, and others of the wittier and more cultured men of the time. The dress and manners of the Revolution were now never seen in polite society. The artificial fraternity of the past, with its "thou" and "citizen," was abandoned. Men ceased to be brothers and became friends once more. The long military coat

* The habit is, of course, pointed to as proof of the indolence of the legendary Talleyrand. The more candid observer would be disposed to refer it to his lameness. We know that Talleyrand had to keep a heavy ironwork about his foot and wear a heavy thick-soled boot. One can easily understand his preference for lying in bed or on a couch.



TALLEYRAND
(Under Napoleon).

and high boots and the tricolor were kept in the camp. The old life was being silently restored. Supple, graceful figures in Bourbon coats, with light rapiers dangling, and long silk hose and buckled shoes, trod the polished floors with confidence. Nature had been thrust out with a fork.

Talleyrand's hotel was the chief centre of the revival. People of taste went to the Tuileries as they went to church or to business. There was little gaiety there. Napoleon, who certainly could talk well, was habitually gloomy and retired ; and one had an uneasy consciousness of his temper and his command of language that is not found in the dictionary. His family and the family of his wife were already in bitter antagonism around him as to the succession to the coming empire. Josephine had displayed, possibly even felt, a tardy devotion to him as his genius fully revealed itself, but she had now herself to bemoan an infidelity which she conceived in the most sombre colours ; and Napoleon, with proof about him of his own fertility, bitterly dwelt on her barrenness. His brothers did not tend to relieve his depression. He could not fondle the pretty son of Louis but the latter would flash forth an angry suspicion of an incestuous relation to Hortense. Lucien and Jerome would not be content to seduce, but must disgrace the family by marrying, two charming nobodies. It is a well known story how on one occasion, when Napoleon was giving a sedate family party, from which Mme. Tallien and other lively friends of Josephine were excluded, a message was handed to the First Consul, and

he burst forth with a violent and inelegant complaint that "Lucien had married his mistress"—to give a polite turn to the phrase.

At Talleyrand's house there was neither restraint nor affectation. Lord Brougham tells us that "nothing could be more perfect than Talleyrand's temper and disposition in private life." Mme. Rémusat affirms that Talleyrand had quickly regretted his choice, but that talkative lady did not love Mme. Talleyrand. The malicious biographers are generally content to give us piquant stories of her lack of culture. One of the chief of these—the protean story of her taking Sir George Robinson for Robinson Crusoe, or Denou for the author of Defoe's work—has been completely discredited by Pichot, an authority on legends. There are more authentic, but less interesting, stories of her ignorance, which must certainly have bored Talleyrand at times. On the whole, the evidence seems to indicate—especially on its negative side—that they lived pleasantly and faithfully together for many years. The wife was, unfortunately, childless. As Talleyrand deeply loved children this must have been a source of great disappointment. He alleviated it by adopting the daughter of a friend who had died in England, and children's balls were frequently given at his hotel.

It was not unnatural that as soon as Napoleon felt his conduct and person to be secretly assailed with witticisms and criticisms he should look to Talleyrand's hotel for the chief source. There was so much in his

melodramatic poses to make the hated Faubourg St. Germain smile. Baron von Gagern tells us of the keen rivalry to enter Talleyrand's circle. Those who had the *entrée* went there after the opera at night, and played whist or billiards until two or three in the morning. "It was," says Lord Brougham, "a lesson and a study, as well as a marvel, to see him disconcert with a look of his keen eyes, or a motion of his chin, a whole piece of wordy talk." When a rumour spread of the death of George III, a Parisian banker came rather impertinently to ask his opinion. "Well," said Talleyrand, gravely, "some say he is dead and some say he is not. I may tell you in confidence that I don't believe either." On another occasion a general of no great culture turned up late for dinner, and began to explain that a "*maudit pékin*" had detained him. Talleyrand asked him what a *pékin* was. He replied that it was a camp-phrase for "all that isn't military." "Oh! I see," said Talleyrand. "Just as we call military all that is not civil."

Dulness was the deadly sin at the Hotel Galiffet. When a not very handsome Englishman was boring the company one day with a long description of the charms of his mother, Talleyrand broke in at the first gap: "It must have been your father, then, who was not very good-looking." He talked little, as a rule. Sometimes he would sit for an hour without speaking, then make a short and brilliant shot, in his sepulchral voice, at something that had been said. When Chateaubriand,

whom he very much despised, had published his "Les Martyrs," a friend gave Talleyrand a very long account of the plot of the work, concluding with the remark that the heroes were "thrown to the beasts." "Like the book," said Talleyrand, bitterly. When another man observed to him that Fouché had a great contempt for humanity, he said : "Yes, he had studied himself very carefully." Another had the imprudence to ask him what had passed at a Council he had attended. "Three hours," said Talleyrand. When he heard that Sémonville, for whom he had little respect, was getting fat, he pretended to be mystified, and explained that he "did not see how it was to Sémonville's interest to get stout." It was of the same man that he afterwards said, when Sémonville had become a senator, and someone was urging that "there were at all events consciences in the Senate" ; "Oh ! yes. Sémonville alone has at least two." There was hardly a prominent person in Paris who did not go about with one or two of these barbs in him. It is well to remember them when we read their comments on him in their memoirs. Sometimes the quips actually came to be applied to himself. A friend, rather a *roué*, met him one day, and complained that he felt "infernal pains" (*douleurs d'enfer*). "Already ?" said Talleyrand. It was pretended in later years that this pretty dialogue passed between himself and Louis Philippe, when he was dying. But Talleyrand could say sweet things as well as bitter on the spur of the moment. It is well known how, when he was challenged

to say which of two ladies at table (Mme. de Staël and Mme. Grand or another) he would rescue from the water first, he turned to one and said : "You are able to swim." So when Napoleon asked him very pointedly how he became rich : "I bought stock on the 18th Brumaire, and sold it the next day." On another occasion, when Napoleon told him he was removing his study to a higher storey, he at once replied : "Naturally, you are bound to live high up."

His attitude towards the First Consul remained loyal and cordial in spite of the occasional strain put on it. I will resume in the next chapter the thread of his official duties, and will deal here with two important events that occurred before war again broke out. The first is the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, in connection with which Talleyrand has been judged so severely.

There is at this hour of the day, and in default of fresh discoveries of documents, nothing new to be said about the pitiful tragedy of 1804. Happily, the progress of research on the matter has tended to exculpate Talleyrand. Writers so wholly devoid of sympathy with him as Mr. Holland Rose now say that the allegations against him are "sufficiently disposed of by the ex-Emperor's will." Napoleon with his last words took full responsibility for the tragedy, and declared he would do it again in similar circumstances. The only question is how far Talleyrand lent assistance in the execution of Napoleon's purpose.

By the end of 1803 the First Consul was driven by his dread of plots into a condition that excited the horror of beholders. Spies and guards constantly surrounded him. Paroxysms of rage by day and sleepless nights wore his nerves and embittered his spirit. The failure of the plot of Georges and Pichegru only served to exasperate him against the Royalist plotters, and he swore to execute the first Bourbon that fell into his hands. When, therefore, a rumour spread that a Bourbon prince had been in Paris in connection with the plot to assassinate him, and the Duc d'Enghien, living only a few miles beyond the frontier, was the only one to whom the rumour could possibly apply, Napoleon turned his thoughts vindictively towards the young prince. The suspicion was increased by positive information received that the Duke had applied for service against France in the English army. A little later a secret agent reported that d'Enghien was conferring with Royalist officers with a view to invading France if the assassination of Napoleon was effected; and when application was made to the Prefect of Strassburg he forwarded a report that the ex-General Dumouriez was with the Duke at Ettenheim. A simple confusion of the names Thumery and Dumouriez thus offered a strong confirmation of the suspicion.

All that Talleyrand had done so far was to write a protest to the Elector of Baden against the use of his territory for conspiracy. The critical moment came when Napoleon summoned him and the other ministers,

the two Consuls, and Fouché, to a council on the matter. At that council it was decided to violate the territory of Baden, and arrest the Duke; the rest was inevitable. What was the attitude of Talleyrand? His accuser is Savary, a bitter enemy, and a writer who is found time after time to distort his narrative in the interest of his prejudices. Savary says that Talleyrand urged that the duke "be arrested and settled with." He gives this on the authority of two documents. The first is the memoirs of Cambacérès (one of the Consuls present, also an enemy of Talleyrand), which have never seen the light, and which, in fact, Savary did not care to invoke till Cambacérès was dead, as he "did not like to mention his name while he was still alive." The other document purports to be an abstract of the speech that Talleyrand delivered on the occasion. All Talleyrand's enemies have built their charge against him on this document. It is a forged document. In this case we have the confession of the forger himself, Talleyrand's mischievous ex-secretary, Perrey. Thus there is not a particle of serious evidence that Talleyrand urged either the arrest or the execution. Such an act would be violently inconsistent with his character. We should require the most positive evidence before admitting it. As a fact, we are invited to believe it on the ground of an acknowledged fabrication and a reference by a malignant enemy to another document which no one else has ever seen.

Talleyrand told Mme. Rémusat that he knew Napoleon was absolutely bent on destroying the Duke

and striking terror into the Bourbons, and so he said nothing. The careful student of his character must feel that that is just what he would do. "The best principle is not to have any at all," he once said with a laugh. He meant that in such cases as this a virtuous protest would do no good whatever, and did not seem worth the torrent of anger it would provoke. We may not admire such prudence, but we must be just to it. Talleyrand could and did protest, before and after this date, when he believed something might be done.

Talleyrand admits that after the Council he wrote three letters at the direction of Napoleon, giving instructions for the arrest, or in connection with it. He says that this was a "painful necessity." The critic could only suggest here that he ought to have resigned, which no one seems to have thought of doing at the time. Another memoir writer of the time, Pasquier, who is hostile to Talleyrand, says that "a lady" heard the Foreign Minister reply to a question about the Duke : "He will be shot." It is a mere *on dit*, but it would not be strange for Talleyrand to have predicted that issue. Savary builds a good deal on a visit that Talleyrand paid to the Governor of Paris after the duke had been brought there. But the object of this is clear. The carriage containing the unfortunate prisoner had been driven by mistake to Talleyrand's hotel, and he had to see the governor about its further direction. It left immediately for Vincennes, and the tragedy was carried to its close. Talleyrand has nothing to do with the last and darkest

scenes, but Savary is deeply implicated. The statement that Talleyrand detained, until it was too late, the Duke's request for an interview has been refuted long ago. On the other hand, Napoleon's statement that he was unaware of the Duke's existence until Talleyrand began to suggest the crime has been proved to be untrue, and is virtually retracted by Napoleon's later and bolder expressions.

Thus when we bring the charge against Talleyrand down to its real proportions, it means that he did not protest against the execution in advance, and did not resign when it was accomplished. It seems clear that he did not regard the event with any horror at the time, and that he really did to some undefined extent regard it as, if not a political necessity, at least an effective political measure. Resignation on account of it was out of the question. He said to someone who suggested it: "If Bonaparte has committed a crime, that is no reason I should make a mistake." We who judge these things dissect them out of their living texture, and set them under our ethical glasses in placid studies. It would be well, perhaps, to put ourselves in the place of a statesman who was a daily witness of the frightful condition into which plotters had thrown Napoleon, and who felt how much the peace of the country was overclouded by Bourbon and English conspirators.*

It would be ingenuous to trace any feeling or lack of feeling in Talleyrand's conduct after the execution.

* Mr. Holland Rose claims to have shown that the officials of the English Foreign Office were co-operating in the Cadoudal conspiracy.

It was his diplomatic duty to kill the feeling of disgust in others, whatever he felt himself. He had not a difficult task. The ball he gave immediately afterwards was well attended ; amongst others the envoy of the Neapolitan Bourbons was there. The Spanish Bourbons shrugged their shoulders, and said it was a pity the Duke had drawn it on himself. Prussia and Austria were without difficulty persuaded to take no notice of the affair. The King of Sweden was disposed to interfere, but Talleyrand sent word to him that "as France did not meddle with Swedish affairs, perhaps Sweden would leave French matters to France." When the Czar sent his Court into mourning, and raised difficulties, Talleyrand met him with the enquiry whether "at the time when England was compassing the death of Paul I every effort would not have been made to have the plotters seized if they were known to be only a league beyond the frontiers." As the murderers of Paul I were the intimate friends of his son and were retained in honour by him, the inquiry sufficiently spoiled the dignity of the Russian protest.

One more great event of the year 1804 must be noticed before we return to foreign affairs. On May 18 Napoleon was declared Emperor. Talleyrand had no repugnance whatever to the re-introduction of the hereditary principle or the formal declaration of the autocracy of Napoleon. He would have preferred the title of king, but Napoleon had a larger prospect. The change took place with the full wish of the country, and seemed to be in its interest. Talleyrand was entrusted with the task

of forming the new Court. From the frame of the old German Empire he borrowed half-a-dozen high-sounding dignities, and he is said to have been much mortified when Napoleon failed to bestow one of those on himself. It is explained that Napoleon did not care to put any minister in an "immovable" position. He was, however, made Grand Chamberlain to the new Emperor, receiving nearly 500,000 francs a year and a much closer association with Napoleon's monarchical ways than he cared for. As Foreign Minister he had the difficult task of inducing Pius VII to come for the coronation—"a miracle of Napoleon's destiny," he calls it. In July he accompanied Napoleon and Josephine to the camp at Boulogne, and then to Aix la Chapelle, where Napoleon posed as the modern Charlemagne to a crowd of small German princes. In November the Pope arrived. The suspicious pontiff did not feel his apprehensions allayed when, at their first meeting, Napoleon deliberately tricked him into taking the second seat in the carriage. Nor was Napoleon too pleased when Josephine appealed to the Pope to have her marriage made secure by a religious ceremony. Cardinal Fesch married them, but the Bonapartists always held that it was invalid as the parish priest was not present. When Rogers asked Talleyrand afterwards whether Napoleon had really married Josephine, he answered: "Not altogether."

Talleyrand witnessed the last act in the drama of the Revolution when, on December 2nd (1804), the three Bonapartes and Josephine, preceded by Murat

and twenty brilliant squadrons of cavalry, drove in a gorgeous chariot to the door of Notre Dame. Where reason and humanity had been enthroned a few years before, a glittering pageantry of Church and State now gathered about the altar for the coronation of a more absolute autocrat than Louis XVI. A Pope, convinced in his conscience of the utter impiety and immorality of Napoleon, solemnly intoned the "Veni, Creator Spiritus," and received Napoleon's profession of faith. In the interest of peace and of the Church, Pius VII stooped to acts that nearly broke his heart. And when the supreme moment came in which he was to crown Napoleon, and thus assert at length and for ever his own ascendancy, Napoleon snatched the crown from its cushion and put it on his own head. For several months the Pope and his ministers remained at Paris. Talleyrand speaks in the memoirs with great respect and sympathy of the Pope, and says that he refused any presents for his family and asked no advantage of a material kind for the Church. We know that he did press for the restoration of the temporal power, and was met with the mocking assurance that "Napoleon must keep what God has given him." So Pius VII returned to Rome empty-handed, with a bitter consciousness of his futile sacrifices and compromises.

CHAPTER XII

THE RENEWAL OF WAR

WE have now to resume the story of work at the Foreign Office, and examine—in so far as Talleyrand figures in them—the complicated events that led to the resumption of hostilities in 1805. The peace with England had not even an illusory appearance of solidity. Napoleon described it as “a short armistice;” George III said it was “an experimental peace.” Napoleon was irritated when Talleyrand used to say that he would have been willing to leave Malta to the English if he could have had the treaty signed by Fox or Pitt instead of the less clear and resolute Addington. But whether or not Napoleon himself regarded the Peace of Amiens as a stage in the conquest of Europe, it undoubtedly presented itself in that light very shortly. Once clothed with the Imperial purple, the mantle of Charlemagne, Napoleon would see the splendid strategic position he occupied in Europe. We must go back a little, however, to understand clearly the negotiations in which Talleyrand was engaged before the second campaign against Austria.

The pretty theory of sharing the world between the Mistress of the Sea and the Mistress of the Land

soon ceased to impose. England was far from willing to surrender Europe to Napoleon. Such an abandonment would have meant the closing of all European ports against her commerce, the closing of the route to India and a descent upon it through Russia, and the loss of Egypt. She therefore watched Napoleon closely in Europe, and clung to Malta on the plea that it was to have been put under the guarantee of the six Powers and four of them would not now carry out the agreement. Thiers blames Talleyrand for not securing this action on the part of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Spain, but it is incredible either that Talleyrand should neglect to press for so serious a guarantee of peace or that Napoleon should allow him to do so. It was the sight of Napoleon's empire creeping out yearly beyond the borders of France that lit the flame—first of suspicion, finally of war. With this fatal ambition Talleyrand had no sympathy.

We have already seen how, after the conclusion of peace, Napoleon annexed Piedmont and Elba, and virtually subjugated Switzerland. Talleyrand declares that he made every effort to dissuade Napoleon from incorporating Piedmont, and we have the evidence of Luchesini that he threatened to resign if Napoleon made himself President of the Swiss Republic. But Piedmont was Napoleon's own conquest, as well as the base of operations in Italy. When England protested against the invasion of Switzerland, and sent agents there to intrigue against the French, he caused Talleyrand

to write a despatch to the French envoy at London, in which he unfolded the whole plan of a conquest of Europe, and the closing of all its ports against England. It is certain that Talleyrand averted the consequences of this by modifying the message before it was actually presented at London. Napoleon also complained bitterly of the protection afforded to royalist conspirators and libellists at London ; and he said that, as Piedmont and Switzerland were not mentioned in the Treaty of Amiens, England had nothing to do with them.

In the early part of 1803 the strain became greater and greater, and led quickly to rupture. The English Ambassador at Paris, Lord Whitworth, was a firm and dignified noble, with instructions to *be* firm and dignified rather than accommodating. Napoleon had, in January, published in the French papers a report on the mission of General Sebastiani to Egypt, the tenor of which was clearly to point to the practicability of a seizure by the French. When, therefore, Talleyrand approached Lord Whitworth on the subject of Malta at the close of the month, he found that England was more determined than ever to keep that island. Talleyrand made a desperate effort to represent the mission as commercial, but Napoleon now took up the matter, confessed that it was *not* wholly commercial, and made his famous project of an arrangement between England and France to govern the world. He had received news of the miscarriage of his West Indian expedition, and now seemed to contemplate a brilliant venture in the East ; but he

wanted peace until his plans were completed. As to Piedmont and Switzerland, they were—he used a word which Lord Whitworth shrinks from committing to paper. George III replied by his appeal for the embodiment of the militia and a further 10,000 men for the Navy. A few days afterwards Napoleon, in his most tactless manner, blurted out to Whitworth, as he stood in the circle of ambassadors at the levee: “So you want war?” He was now convinced that war was inevitable, but he wanted to throw the burden of declaring it on England.

Early in April Whitworth presented the English terms. Malta must be retained by England, Holland and Switzerland be evacuated by France and Elba ceded to her, and the Italian and Ligurian Republics would be recognized. When Talleyrand disclosed the terms informally to Napoleon, he would listen to no compromise that would nearly satisfy England. He prepared another violent charge to be made upon Whitworth at the levee on May 1st, but the English Ambasssdor was absent. Napoleon returned to St. Cloud, and dictated minute and characteristic instructions to Talleyrand for a last interview with Whitworth. “Be cold, haughty, and even rather proud in your bearing. If his note contains the word ultimatum, point out to him that this word includes ‘war,’ and that such a manner of negotiating is rather that of a superior towards an inferior; if the letter does not contain the word, force him to insert it. . . . Make him apprehensive as to the consequences

of delivering such a note. If he is unshakable, accompany him into your salon. When he is leaving you, say : 'Are the Cape and the Island of Gorée evacuated !' Tone down the close of the interview, and invite him to see you again before writing home, so that you can tell him what effect it has had on me."

All the acting of the accomplished artists was of no avail. The ultimatum had to be presented by Talleyrand, and he was soundly abused by Napoleon for doing so. It was submitted to the Council at St. Cloud on May 11th, and all present except Talleyrand and Joseph Bonaparte voted for the rejection of the British demands. Lord Whitworth left Paris on the following day. England declared war on France six days later. Thus opened the Titanic struggle that was to bring Napoleon to the dust after ten weary years, and after spreading the flames of war from Moscow to Madrid. The biographer of Talleyrand has only to point out that here the Foreign Minister begins to diverge from the First Consul. We shall find them again in closest co-operation, until Napoleon's harsh, arrogant and unworthy treatment of Austria, Prussia, and Spain compels Talleyrand to leave him ; but the divergence begins in 1803, if not at the end of 1802. Talleyrand disapproved of the Gallicising of Piedmont and Switzerland, the mission of Sebastiani, the irritating language of the French official press and official documents, and the strict insistence on the evacuation of Malta by the English. He faced and endured the anger of Napoleon by his opposition.

Napoleon to some extent declined to use him in the negotiations with England on account of his pacific feeling ; Whitworth is said to have avoided him somewhat because of his "corruption." But he stands out clearly in this crisis as a friend of peace and humanity, a wise and honest adviser, a firm opponent of Napoleon's growing and benighting ambition. Meantime, while Napoleon is devising means to overleap the great barrier of his plans, the English Channel, we have to follow Talleyrand in the complicated negotiations with which he fought England for the alliance or the neutrality of the continental Powers.

Talleyrand was already in diplomatic correspondence with Russia, Prussia and Austria, about the "perfidy" of England in refusing to carry out the chief enactment of the Treaty of Amiens—the evacuation of Malta. The impressionable young Tsar was touched, and complained of the obscurity of England's aims. Napoleon at once proposed that he should mediate between the belligerents, and for some months he was understood to be prepared to negotiate in this sense. As a fact he was deeply engrossed in humanitarian reform in his own country, and he had a growing suspicion of Napoleon's aims. After prolonged communications he succeeded in drawing Prussia into a defensive alliance (May 24th, 1805) against France. This was a serious diplomatic defeat for Talleyrand, who had at the same time been endeavouring to secure the Prussian alliance. He had, in fact, concentrated his

efforts to obtain at least a benevolent neutrality from Berlin. "Do not be afraid of that mountain of snow, Russia," he wrote. Napoleon distributed honours at the Prussian Court, and made generous offers of terms, but the deeply perplexed and anxious successor of Frederic the Great ended his long vacillation by concluding a treaty with his friend, the Tsar.

It would be useless here to describe in any detail the diplomatic work of the next two years (from the declaration of war by England to the opening of the campaign in 1805). Talleyrand's task was to meet and defeat the effort of Pitt to raise up a fresh coalition against Napoleon. He made a loyal and brilliant effort to do so, but entirely failed. Napoleon's encroachments were too obvious, his power in Europe too menacing, his concessions in diplomacy too tardy and niggardly to enable him to resist the power of English gold and the zeal of the alienated Tsar. His only successes were of an inglorious character. He forced helpless Spain to acquiesce in the sale of Louisiana to the United States for eighty millions, and to send seventy-two millions a year to the French treasury. Napoleon assisted his diplomacy in this case with two arguments: the formation of a huge military camp near the Spanish frontier, and a threat to draw the attention of Europe to the delicate relations of the Spanish Queen and leading minister.

In the course of the year 1804, Russia was approached by England, and the Tsar showed a

willingness to enter into an alliance for the control of Napoleon and in the interest of Europe. The mercantile differences which had kept the two nations apart were gradually adjusted, and a treaty was concluded in April, 1805. Gustavus IV of Sweden was already engaged to Russia in the same sense. Austria, too, was bound by a secret agreement with Russia (November 6th, 1804) if Napoleon made any further aggression in Italy, or threatened the integrity of Turkey. Thus by the middle of 1805 a formidable coalition was in existence. The correspondence of Talleyrand with Napoleon during that period is an amazing indication of activity. He keeps the Emperor informed of events in Turkey and Sweden, Russia and England, Prussia and Austria; he sends the news from the surgeons who are with the armies and the secret agents who are plotting and observing from Ireland to Persia; he tells the latest marriages at Paris, the dissipations of the ambassadors, the small scandals, so finely told, that will relieve Napoleon's leisure hours.* There was no lack of spirit or ability in his work, but Napoleon had cast for war and it could at the most only be postponed. When Talleyrand evaded the task of writing the violent letters he directed to be sent to foreign Courts, he wrote them himself. The Prussian Ambassador informed his Court that Napoleon was

* In one letter, for instance, he tells how the Spanish Minister at Paris had died and left him 60,000 francs to settle on his god-daughter. "I found," he adds, "that she had a more sacred title to his interest than that,"

forced into war in order to cover his enormous accumulation of men at Boulogne for the ostensible purpose of attacking England.

The spark that lit the conflagration was Napoleon's descent into Italy in May, 1805. Talleyrand accompanied him to Milan. On May 26th he crowned himself King of Italy with the famous iron crown of the Lombard Kings, directed that a series of splendid spectacles should impress upon the astounded nations this last stroke of the effrontery of genius. The Ligurian or Genoese Republic was at the same time declared to be incorporated in the French Empire. Austria was now bound by her agreement with Russia to take action and she began to move her forces. Talleyrand went back to Paris with Napoleon but at the close of August we find he has joined the Emperor at Boulogne. By this time all hope of invading England was over. The combined French and Spanish fleet had retreated to Cadiz. With a phrase Napoleon converted the huge army, stretching nine miles along the coast, into "the army of Germany," wheeled it about to face Austria, and set out for Paris to make his final preparations.

Talleyrand followed Napoleon to Strassburg towards the close of September. On the day that the Emperor was to leave for the field Talleyrand dined with him, and was greatly alarmed when Napoleon fell into a fit, which lasted half an hour. He made the Foreign Minister promise to keep it a secret, and was off in half an hour

to Carlsruhe.* The letters he writes to Napoleon at this time exhale the old perfume. "He is afflicted beyond expression" to hear that he will learn nothing of Napoleon for five or six days. In another letter he says: "Your Majesty will always be deceived if you expect to find in other kings the grandeur of soul, the loftiness of sentiments, and the firmness of character that distinguish you." This is a little rank, but there are other indications besides these letters that the old intimacy and confidence had been restored. Talleyrand had bitterly regretted the events at Milan, but, with his usual acceptance of accomplished facts, he was hoping that the defeat of Austria (of which he could entertain no doubt) would relieve Napoleon's ardour and pave the way for peace. He wrote to d'Hauterive that the best thing would be for Napoleon to give up the kingdom of Italy, force Austria to abandon Venice, find her compensation in Germany, and enter into an alliance with her. That would remove grounds of quarrel in Italy. At the same time he prepared a memorandum, and even a treaty, to submit to Napoleon after the defeat of Austria. Italy was to be given up, Switzerland declared neutral, and the territory exacted of Austria to be divided among the small German States that had joined France.

He sent this admirable memorandum to Napoleon on the day he heard of the victory at Ulm. It had not

* Rogers, hearing this from Talleyrand, asked Lucien if he knew of it. Lucien said he did not; but he added with a laugh that he knew his brother had once had a similar fit when an actress declined to be honoured by him.

sufficient of the arrogance of the conqueror in it for Napoleon. He submitted it as the subject of a discussion in Council, but the continued success of his arms made him ambitious to dictate "better" terms. The news of Trafalgar—Talleyrand broke it to him in his happiest manner: "Genius and good fortune were in Germany"—did not arrest him, or, indeed, forced him to look yet more to continental expansion now that his colonial scheme was shattered. He mistook Talleyrand's sagacity and good sense for a puling humanitarianism. From Munich they passed on to Vienna, where Talleyrand had to press Napoleon's harsh terms on Austria's despairing statesmen. On December 1st he again framed a sober and reasonable treaty, but the next day occurred the battle of Austerlitz. "The Emperor Alexander," he says bitterly in his memoirs, "was rather bored at Olmütz; he had never witnessed a battle, and he wanted to see the fun." Talleyrand was exasperated against Russia and Austria for not coming to terms earlier. The day after Austerlitz he crossed the field with Marshal Lannes, and saw even that hardened soldier turn away with a feeling of sickness. He saw Napoleon established in the house of an Austrian prince, and the proudest flags and distinguished commanders of the two beaten nations brought to his feet.* He felt how difficult it would be

* He relieves his narrative here by telling how the courier arrived from Paris, and Napoleon interrupted his triumph to read his correspondence. There was a letter from Mme. de Genlis, and Napoleon fell

now to restrain the conqueror, though he made one more eloquent appeal to him not to ruin Austria and sow a harvest of hatred on the frontier of France. Napoleon shook aside the appeal with a suspicion that Talleyrand must have been bought.

From Austerlitz he went to Brünn, and there heard with increased disgust that the Prussian Ambassador, Haugwitz, had signed a treaty of alliance with Napoleon. "Was it crime or folly?" Talleyrand asks. Prussia had agreed with Russia to offer armed mediation to Napoleon, and to make war on him if he did not accept it by December 15th. Instead of this, Haugwitz was bullied and bribed (by the offer of Hanover) into signing an alliance. Talleyrand hurried on to Pressburg to meet the Austrian envoys. Those who are tempted to conceive him as indolent would do well to read his letters at this time. At five in the morning of the 23rd he writes to tell Napoleon that he was half-blinded in crossing the frozen Danube, and so could not write earlier (evidently there are no obscure assistants doing the work for him here), but is now resuming work. At two on the following morning he tells that he has had a twelve hours' conference with the Austrians, and will begin again at eight. But Napoleon was inexorable. The only modification of the terms that he would grant was a reduction of the indemnity by ten million francs.

into a violent storm of anger and mortification in the midst of his glory as he heard of the irrepressible chattering about him of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Austria had to part with Venice, Tyrol, Friuli, Istria, and Dalmatia, and to recognise the kingdom of Italy. That was Napoleon's reply to Talleyrand's memorandum. He had begun to sow the dragon's teeth. The Austrian ministers were forced to sign the Treaty on January 1st. The only service Talleyrand could render them was to make the terms free from ambiguity. This action was described by Napoleon as "infamous and corrupt." Talleyrand knew his master. Once before, when someone was giving him instructions from Napoleon as to the framing of the Cisalpine Constitution, and was telling him to make it "short and clear," Talleyrand interrupted him with the words: "Yes, short and obscure."

Mr. Holland Rose fully admits the unwisdom of Napoleon in rejecting Talleyrand's plan of settlement, but he thinks it rather due to the idea of a "continental system" against England than to mere lust of domination. The very scanty sea frontier of Austria made her a matter of indifference in Napoleon's plan of excluding England from Europe; it was far more important to win Prussia and Russia, and the Northern States. No one will question that the dream of the universal closing of ports was at work in the Treaty, but it does not explain some of the worst features of Napoleon's divergence from Talleyrand. In any case, it is unquestionable that, as Talleyrand says, "moderation began to desert Napoleon after the Peace of Amiens," and each fresh victory — Ulm, Austerlitz,

Jena, Friedland — increased his insensibility to the sound law that a harsh and insolent settlement is not final. This is the just and honourable ground of that dissidence of feeling on the part of Talleyrand that culminated in “desertion.”

In January they returned to Paris. Napoleon arrived there at midnight of the 26th, and he opened a financial council at eight the following morning. His minister was scarcely less active. In the midst of his distinctive labours he had found time to study the financial disorder at home, and had submitted to Napoleon a new plan of a bank. Now that they were in Paris again the work of settlement had to be resumed. Haugwitz arrived on February 1st with fresh proposals from the King of Prussia, who had refused to ratify his outrageous treaty of Schönbrunn until peace was concluded with England. Napoleon's whole policy being directed against England, he took advantage of Prussia's delay to declare the treaty of Schönbrunn annulled, and make Talleyrand draw up a fresh one which bound Prussia to join the system by closing the Elbe and Weser against England. The new treaty was ratified at Berlin before the end of February. France had ceded Hanover to Prussia as her reward, but Hanover belonged to England. Moreover, a few weeks later Napoleon made his brother Louis King of Holland, as he had already made Joseph King of Naples. The second chief ground of Talleyrand's divergence from Napoleon—the setting up of thrones for his family—was

beginning to appear. "I don't understand your way of doing business at all," said Napoleon angrily to him, when he allowed the King of Prussia to state that the occupation of Hanover had been forced on him. There was "business" enough to do in the six months that followed. Besides trouble with the Vatican and renewed trouble with Austria, as well as the establishment of Louis and Joseph in Holland and Naples, there were important negotiations with England, Prussia, Russia and the great work of forming the Rhine Confederation.

Fox had returned to office in England, and had opened communications by sending information to Paris of a plot (often thought to be a diplomatic one) against the Emperor's life. Talleyrand eagerly followed up the opening, and expressed willingness to treat with England by means of Lord Yarmouth, who had been detained as a prisoner at Verdun. Yarmouth went to London with an assurance that France was not hopelessly fixed as regards Hanover, and returned full of hope on June 16th. But Napoleon's vulpine diplomacy was again overruling Talleyrand. He had forced him to promise Prussia secretly that France would not sacrifice Hanover, and to open separate negotiations with Russia. The only difficulties that Napoleon recognised, Talleyrand says, were those that force cannot overcome. His minister had now to conduct a most complex and mendacious communication with the three Powers, though it might be pleaded in extenuation that the Powers were also endeavouring to outwit each other. The policy of

England was comparatively straight—so straight, in fact, that it was her minister who innocently betrayed Napoleon's duplicity. But while England refused to negotiate a peace independently of Russia, that Power was endeavouring to make a separate treaty with France, and deceiving England as to her unfriendly designs on Turkey ; while she was at the same time concluding a secret agreement against France with Prussia. The latter Power, secretly signing the treaty against France on July 1st with Russia, was receiving from Napoleon the reassurance of Hanover (already promised by France to England) and entertaining proposals from him for her aggrandisement in Germany. France was simultaneously offering Hanover to England and Prussia, was secretly creating a great German confederation and denying to England and Prussia that she contemplated any changes in Germany, was playing with England until she could secure the separate alliance with Russia, and was secretly raising opposition to the latter Power in Turkey. And amidst this maze of negotiations and intrigue Talleyrand was coolly creating the Rhine Confederation and dealing with the huge crowd of German delegates who besieged the Hotel Galiffet with further demands for plunder or redress.

This network of intrigue broke by its own weight, and the sword of Napoleon did the rest before the close of the year. A Russian envoy arrived at Paris about the very date when the Tsar was concluding his secret alliance with Prussia against Napoleon. As in an

earlier episode with Austria, the envoy was worried into going far beyond his powers and signing a treaty with France. He afterwards declared that Talleyrand terrified him with a threat that, unless he signed, Austria would again be attacked and annihilated. As soon as the Russian envoy had gone Talleyrand turned to Lord Yarmouth, and threatened that Portugal would be invaded unless England came to terms. Yarmouth in the meantime had betrayed to the Prussian Ambassador the French offer to give up Hanover, and Napoleon intercepted dispatches in which the Ambassador urged his Court to appeal to Russia. Moreover, Talleyrand had denied to Yarmouth that any changes were contemplated in Germany, although he must have already completed the scheme of the Rhine Confederation, and it was published a few days afterwards. England thereupon sent Lord Lauderdale to support, and eventually supersede, Yarmouth. Talleyrand says this was done "to please Lord Grenville," but his dislike of Lauderdale is clearly due to the fact that he now had stiffer material to deal with. In August he wrote to Napoleon: "The claims of Lord Lauderdale over his slain sailor, and the fuss he makes of the affair, are the acts of a man who has been all his life a clubman and parliamentary declaimer, and does not know that an incident that may make a great scene between two parties is generally one that vanishes before more precise information and moderate explanations."

Talleyrand was as ardent as ever for peace with England. Napoleon leaned just as strongly to his continental system against England. The march of events frustrated Talleyrand's pacific aim once more. On the strength of his treaty with Russia, Napoleon made Talleyrand present exorbitant terms to Lauderdale, who demanded his passports. "Delay him a little," said Napoleon; "tell him I am hunting and will be back soon." He was hoping to hear of the ratification of the Russian treaty. He heard instead that the Tsar refused to sign it, and had appointed a Gallophobe minister. He still, however, refused to meet England by withdrawing his demand for Sicily, and in a week or two the whole intrigue came to a close in war with Prussia.

The betrayal of Napoleon's duplicity in regard to Hanover had caused a very natural and dangerous agitation in Prussia. This was more than doubled when the Act of the Confederation of the Rhine was signed and published in July. The new kings created by Napoleon in 1805 (Wurtemberg, Baden, and Bavaria), in the partition of the ecclesiastical territory on the Rhine, had attempted to exercise the full feudal rights of the old Empire. The smaller princes, free towns, and "immediate" nobles appealed against them to France, and a fresh settlement was necessary. In co-operation with Bishop Dalberg, Talleyrand (who had now a new ex-clerical assistant, La Besnardière) began the work of settling disputes and drafting the chief of the smaller states into a Rhein-Bund, to be controlled

by Napoleon. Only the representatives of Wurtemberg, Baden, and Bavaria were to be admitted to a share in the secret construction, but the rumour of it brought a flock of Teutonic envoys to beset the Hotel Galiffet, while Prussian, English, and Austrian spies hovered restlessly about. The Act was completed by the middle of July, and all the south German princelings were admitted to sign it. It is usual to point out here that Talleyrand once more reaped a rich harvest for his work. No one would question that he, as usual, accepted presents from the States that benefitted by admission. But here again charges have been endorsed without the least discrimination. Count von Senfft, who is more or less friendly to Talleyrand, should be the safest witness to rely upon. Senfft, however, tells us that Talleyrand made use of Von Gagern "in his financial relations with the German princes"; whereas Von Gagern, while confessing a belief that Talleyrand did make a lot of money somehow, gives us his solemn and credible assurance that not a farthing passed between them in connection with the Rhine Confederation.* There can be no doubt that Talleyrand's profit has been grossly exaggerated. On the political side it is not questioned that the new creation was a great advantage to France, however selfish her motive may have been ;

* Towards the close of his "Memoirs" (Mein Antheil an der Politik," vol. vi.) he again emphatically denies that "zwischen mir und ihm, weder direct noch indirect, sowohl was die Nassauischen als die Zahlreichen andern Fürstern betrifft die ich in den Rheinbund aufnehmen liess, zu irgend einem Handel, Bedingung, oder Bieten gekommen sei."

it raised a bulwark against Prussia and Russia, and provided a fresh army to Napoleon of 63,000 men. Nor is it questioned that the unification and the adoption of the Napoleonic Code brought great advantages to the States involved.

The work of the year seems to have increased Napoleon's appreciation of Talleyrand in spite of occasional suspicion and annoyance. In June he bestowed on his foreign minister the papal fief of Benevento, with the title of Prince. He had appropriated Benevento and Ponte Corvo on the ground that they led to incessant friction between Rome and Naples. Talleyrand merely claims that his rule in Benevento sheltered that little principality "from all spoliation and from conscription." His biographers have not done him justice in the matter. Not only did Talleyrand abstain from making profit out of his gift, but he at once dispatched to Italy a humane and enlightened governor, and had a policy carried out in the sleepy and retrograde province that was of immense service to it.* On his side Talleyrand seems to have retained for some time the feeling of disappointment produced by Napoleon's treatment of Austria. There is a distinct coolness in his letters throughout the spring and summer. But Napoleon overcame his repugnance, and they set out together for the Prussian campaign in apparent cordiality. At all events it is recorded that Napoleon wept on leaving Talleyrand at Mayence.

* See Demaria's "Benevento sotto il Principe Talleyrand."

If Prussia had joined with the Austrians and Russians before Austerlitz, Napoleon's position would have been very serious. He contrived to keep Haugwitz on the move until after that battle, and then persuaded him to sign an alliance. By the time Prussia learned how much she was really despised at Paris—a contempt in which Talleyrand now entirely joined with D'Hauterive—Austria was powerless, Russia had demobilised, and England was so far alienated that her offer of assistance only arrived after Jena. But when the news of the secret creation of the Rhine Confederation came on top of the exasperation over Hanover, the national temper was raised to white heat, and the King flung out a single-handed challenge to Napoleon. It was not without anxiety that Napoleon confronted the Prussian forces for the first time; and Talleyrand expresses real concern in his letters from Mayence, where he is staying with the Empress and the Queen of Holland. "Three days without news of you," he writes, "are three centuries of anxiety and pain." He warns Napoleon that there is a plot to assassinate him amongst the Prussian officers. At last (October 14th) comes the report of Jena. Within one month of their leaving Paris he is in Berlin with Napoleon, and sees the Emperor proudly dictating notes to his army in the cabinet of Frederick the Great.

Talleyrand remained at Berlin until the end of November, but Napoleon, who was bent on crushing Prussia as he had crushed Austria, began to dispense

with the services of his moderate councillor. Talleyrand had nothing to do with the insulting bulletins issued from the Prussian capital, or the Berlin Decree against England. Indeed, he affirms that in view of Napoleon's attitude towards Prussia and Spain (which had just shown a not obscure sign of revolt) he resolved to resign his position as soon as they returned to France. He did this, as a matter of fact, but he had much to see and to do before reaching Paris once more. Napoleon brushed aside the Prussian negotiators at Berlin, and marched on to Posen to deal with Russia. Talleyrand joined him there, found him haranguing a deputation of Poles (got up by Murat) on national greatness, and telling them they will be a nation when they furnish him with an army of 40,000 men. Talleyrand also says that he found Napoleon reading a list of pictures to be taken to Paris from the Dresden galleries, and succeeded in preventing the raid. They moved on to Warsaw, where Napoleon left him to go and "shove these new Europeans [the Russians] back into their former limits." He made a bad beginning at Pultusk, but returned to Warsaw as bombastic as ever, and spent several weeks in infusing military ardour into Poland and extracting an army from it. Talleyrand profited by the Emperor's temporary check to save the lives of a few small places (Anhalt, Lippé, Waldeck, Reuss, and Schwartzburg) by including them in the Rhine Confederation. Napoleon wanted them for Murat, and did not thank his Foreign Minister for again thwarting him.

But the service rendered by Talleyrand to Napoleon during that winter in Poland was considerable. Napoleon did not at first set a stirring example. He fell into a period of sensuality, and, says Talleyrand, "laid his glory publicly enough at the feet of a beautiful Pole." The Countess Anastase Walewska, then only seventeen years old, aspired to influence the Emperor in the interest of her country, and only succeeded in making the winter pass pleasantly for him at the castle of Finkenstein. Von Gagern, who met her and her son afterwards at Paris, was at Warsaw, and says that Talleyrand told him one day he was unwilling any longer to be "an instrument in the hand of the destroying angel of Europe." He was at that time acting, not only as diplomatic minister in the continuous correspondence with Austria and Prussia, but as chief military agent. Napoleon had appointed an incompetent governor at Warsaw, and had enjoined Talleyrand to see to the commissariat and transport of the army. "To-day," the Emperor writes on March 12th, "the fate of Europe and the greatest calculations depend on supplies. It will be child's play to beat the Russians if I have food. Whatever you do will be done well. The charge I entrust to you is more important than all the negotiations in the world." The hundred letters that Talleyrand writes to him during those four months—letters clearly written with his own hand—reflect an amazing activity. He is seeing, amid tremendous difficulties, that the Emperor gets 50,000 rations of

biscuits and 2,000 pints of brandy, and so on, every day : he has had to settle a strike of the transport servants and the bakers : he has been round the military hospitals, distributing gifts from the Emperor, and "listening to the little requests" of the wounded soldiers ; he sends the latest information about the state of the roads and the finances, the movements of the enemy, the dissipations of the Court at Warsaw, the important and interesting passages in the French and English journals, the progress of negotiations with Austria, Turkey, Prussia, &c. His carriage is fired at by guerillas as he travels, or sticks in the mud for hours together. He has at times to put up with the most wretched accommodation.

But Baron von Gagern makes a superfluous conjecture when he fancies the laborious stay in Poland had any influence on Talleyrand's attitude towards Napoleon. There are more obvious grounds for the divergence. On the whole, Talleyrand's feeling at this time was much the same as before Ulm and Austerlitz. He was waiting to see what use would be made of the new successes. He sends cordial messages to the Emperor, and performs his heavy duties loyally and well, with an occasional furtive departure for some humane motive. One day he comes to tell Von Gagern that a young Prussian count is in the Russian camp, and must be got away at once or Napoleon will hear and inflict heavy punishment. Von Gagern learns through Austria that the Count is seriously ill.

"That is a mere empty phrase to the Emperor," says Talleyrand, and insists on his removal. He was transferred without the matter coming to Napoleon's ears, and his house was saved. Von Gagern adds that Talleyrand refused to take a single florin for the service he had rendered.

On the other hand he refused and returned four million florins that were put in the hands of his confidant, Baron Dalberg, by the Poles. Talleyrand rather despised the Poles as an incompetent and quarrelsome people. He resisted all efforts to induce him to take up their cause. The caresses of Princess Poniatowski and Countess Tyszkiewicz had no more effect than the offer of money, though they modified his dislike of Poland, and made him say in the end that he "quitted it with regret."

At last the Russian winter dissolved and Napoleon moved his forces. On February 8th came the news of Eylau, "a battle more or less won," Talleyrand says. Von Gagern found him in good spirits because he was empowered to offer moderate terms to Prussia, but the negotiations fell through, and he had to wait for the decisive overthrow of Russia. It was about this time that Napoleon once fell asleep in the room with him, and Talleyrand remained in his chair the whole night so as not to awake him. Then came Friedland (June 14th), and Talleyrand, who had left Warsaw in May, made a stirring appeal to the Emperor for peace. He trusts it is his "last victory" and a "guarantee of peace." But the

disappointment of the preceding year was to be repeated, and he was to see Napoleon's soaring ambition take a flight that he could not follow. The Tsar, though he knew Austria was preparing for action and Tartar reinforcements were on the way, arranged an armistice with Napoleon, and Prussia had to do the same. The proceedings that followed when the two Emperors met at Tilsit completed Talleyrand's repugnance to Napoleon's policy. Victory was once more made the step to a further war. The whole of Europe was now to be enlisted against England in the long dreamed of "continental system." Alexander was exasperated against England for her failure to support him, and listened eagerly to the new idea of sharing the world between France and Russia (Napoleon's "new Europeans" of nine months ago). Whether or no it is true that Alexander's first words to Napoleon, as he stepped on to the raft in the middle of the Niemen (which fitted so well in "the poem of his life," says Talleyrand), were: "I hate the English as much as you do, and I will second you in all your projects against them,"* the whole arrangement concluded was directed against England. Prussia and Russia were forced into the continental system. Prussia was humbled to the dust, and reduced from nine to four million inhabitants. Talleyrand says Alexander thought he had "done all that friendship

* I give the quotation with a becoming hesitation, because, though Mr. H. Rose says "it is difficult to see on what evidence this story rests," Professor Sloane says the words are "reported by Napoleon himself."



ALEXANDER I., EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

required for the King of Prussia in nominally preserving half his kingdom." He saw the Tsar's eyes sparkle when Napoleon, on receiving news of the deposition of the Sultan, spoke to him, "with an air of submitting to the decrees of Providence," of an inevitable dismemberment of Turkey. But Napoleon told Talleyrand privately that not a word must be said in the treaty about Turkey, or about Moldavia and Wallachia, which also he had dangled before the eyes of the Tsar.

Talleyrand was disgusted at Napoleon's brutal treatment of Prussia. He had several tender interviews with the Prussian Queen, and she spoke to him with great feeling at her departure. He had also several private interviews with Alexander, and, although he greatly disliked that monarch's betrayal of Prussia, he won an influence over him which was to have historic importance. At the time it is possible, perhaps, to trace Talleyrand's moderating influence in one or two details of the Treaty. He had, however, rigid instructions from Napoleon, and he had to sign the treaty with Prussia without having had any share in making it. There is a story of his betraying the secret articles to England. It rests on no authority, and Mr. Holland Rose has shown in his "Napoleonic Studies" that it is completely untenable.

He returned to Paris in August, and immediately resigned the foreign ministry. The separation was made in apparent amity. In a letter of August 10th (1807) Talleyrand tells the Emperor he is performing his last

act as foreign minister, but “the first and last sentiment of my life will be gratitude and devotion.” Napoleon was no less polite. He created a rich sinecure, the Vice-grand Electorship, for Talleyrand. He dropped his pilot with grace and forged ahead—towards the rocks. When Paris heard of Talleyrand’s new appointment, it said : “Another vice for him.”

CHAPTER XIII

AWAY FROM NAPOLEON

THE legendary version of Talleyrand's character that still lingers amongst encyclopædists and historians is refuted by his resignation in 1807. No cause can be assigned for it except an honest refusal to co-operate further with Napoleon's harsh and dangerous and selfish policy. "Napoleon has abandoned the cause of peoples and is bent only on personal glory. He has entered on the fatal path of nepotism, in which I shall decline to follow him." Talleyrand said this in 1807, not as a later explanation of his step. To Mme. de Rémusat he also said, in the same year: "Napoleon suspects me whenever I speak of moderation; if he ceases to believe me you will see with what folly he will compromise himself and us." We are offered no serious alternative as a motive of Talleyrand's retirement, which Count von Senfft describes as "very honorable." The Emperor, says Senfft, wanted "absolutely submissive instruments." Talleyrand declined to be one, as soon as the tragic selfishness of Napoleon was fully revealed. No one affected not to understand his action. It was a protest—a protest made at the height of Napoleon's power. He had worked loyally and well with the Emperor "to

establish for France monarchical institutions which should guarantee the authority of the sovereign by restricting it within just limits ; and to induce Europe not to grudge France her prosperity and glory." Now Napoleon's ambition was naked, France was burdened with the most exacting and ruinous military servitude to it, humanity was trodden under foot. And the only man in France to refuse further service was the man who is glibly described as devoid of principle or ideal, and prepared at all times to sell his soul to the wealthiest master.

So little obligation is felt to historical facts by those early and malicious biographers of Talleyrand, on whom our historians seem to rely, that Michaud says he is "quite sure" Talleyrand remained even after Tilsit the inspirer of Napoleon's plans of conquest. Michaud is thinking in the first place of Napoleon's descent on Spain, and it must be admitted that it requires careful study to determine Talleyrand's attitude on this subject. Just before Jena, the Spanish minister, Godoy, had commenced operations for war against some unnamed Power, which all knew to be France, and Napoleon had sworn to Talleyrand that he would extinguish the Spanish Bourbons. When the news of Napoleon's success reached Madrid, Godoy endeavoured to undo his terrible blunder, and Napoleon concealed for a time the claw that was in readiness for Spain. They returned to Paris in August, and Napoleon shortly turned his attention to the Peninsula. Portugal had refused to join in the blockade against England. A treaty was

signed by Spain and France, dividing it (in very unequal fractions) between them, and the French troops crossed the Pyrenees.

I need only summarise here the rapid and disgraceful succession of events in Spain. After Portugal had been taken, the French troops remained masters of Spain. In March the Spanish people, threatened with national ruin and disgusted with their incompetent and scandalous rulers, effected a Revolution. Charles IV abdicated, and was replaced by Ferdinand. Napoleon arrived at Bayonne, enticed both Ferdinand and the late Royal Family there by a trick, and forced them to abdicate. He wrote to Talleyrand on May 1st: "King Charles is a frank and good-looking fellow. The Queen's sentimentality and history are written on her face—that will tell you enough. Godoy looks like a bull . . . He had better be relieved of any imputation of lying, but must be left covered with a thin veil of contempt. Ferdinand is a brute, very malicious, and very hostile to France." A few days later he wrote again to say that Talleyrand must receive and guard the Spanish princes at the mansion he had just bought at Valençay. "Your mission is an honourable one," he says, sarcastically. "To receive and entertain three illustrious personages is quite in keeping with the character of the nation and with your rank."

Talleyrand affirms in the memoirs that he had entirely disapproved the Spanish expedition, and that Napoleon sent the princes to him in order to make it

appear that he approved. His enemies and Napoleon declare that he fully endorsed and urged the expedition until its evil effects were clear, and then disowned it. We have here another of the "mysteries" of Talleyrand's career. The subject had arisen while he was with the Emperor in Germany and Poland, and, although he had resigned the Foreign Ministry on their return, it must not be supposed that he ceased entirely to share the conduct of foreign affairs. Senfft says that his successor in the Ministry, Champagny, so bored and annoyed Napoleon by the contrast of his incompetence, that Talleyrand was practically recalled to office in October. The truth seems to be that his Chancellorship, which gave him a certain formal interest in foreign affairs, was interpreted with some elasticity. For a time Talleyrand did not resist this. We shall find him doing important work presently. He had made his protest sufficiently clear.

However, in the matter of the Spanish expedition it seems possible to show that Talleyrand had little or no influence. Did he, or did he not, approve the expedition, apart from the treacherous termination? In his memoirs he says that he violently opposed this "insensate" invasion, and that "the disgrace which my candour brought on me justifies me in my conscience for separating myself from his policy and finally from his person." This was written, of course, after all the world saw the blunder. Thiers concludes that he recovered Napoleon's favour after Tilsit by complaisance in his

Spanish plans. He relies on Cambacérès, who is habitually hostile to Talleyrand. Pasquier, another hostile writer, says that Talleyrand urged Napoleon to make war on Spain, and appropriate the crown. D'Hauterive is described by his biographer as saying that Talleyrand was "in favour of the expedition *on certain conditions*." Napoleon declared to Las Cases that Talleyrand "goaded him into war." Mme. de Rémusat, generally credible, says Talleyrand "was in favour of an open declaration of war" to overthrow the dynasty in the interest of Spain. Lytton quotes Beugnot for his belief that Talleyrand opposed the expedition altogether ; and Count Ségur quotes de Pradt virtually to the same effect.

We have the usual conflict of evidence. We must at once distrust Napoleon's later statements. The ex-Emperor would not take the trouble to "lie beautifully." He forfeits all claim to be heard here when he goes on to say that Talleyrand urged him to murder the Spanish princes ! I am just as ready to surrender Talleyrand's statement that he "vehemently opposed" the expedition. In fact he also says : "Driven to death by the specious arguments of the Emperor, I advised him to occupy Catalonia until he should be able to conclude a maritime peace with England." If we moderate the first few words, we probably have here the truth of the matter ; though it is very possible that the sight of the incompetence of the royal family and the distress of Spain kept his mind in some vacillation as to

the intervention of France. That he urged Napoleon to invade and annex Spain is a statement made by the Emperor's admirers only after it had proved a fatal and dishonourable enterprise ; that the Emperor needed any such urging on the part of Talleyrand is a perfectly ludicrous supposition. The most probable reading of the situation (as regards Spain) *before* the troops cross the Pyrenees is that Talleyrand wavered between two motives—a keen perception of Spain's evil plight on the one hand and of Napoleon's ambition and nepotism on the other—and used vaguely approving language.

The final action of Napoleon was determined by the course of events, and not submitted for his approval or disapproval. There is no ambiguity about Talleyrand's attitude on that. He was at his new home at Valençay in Touraine, a large and beautiful chateau lying in an extensive park, when the Spanish royal carriage arrived. In its heavy mediæval splendour, with its panels of gold and silver, its curtains of crimson silk, and its huge gilt wheels, it reminded him painfully of the arrested development of Spain. He received the two young princes and their uncle with some feeling, and then set out for Nantes to meet Napoleon. If we may trust the memoirs (I would not press the point), he told Napoleon very freely what he thought of his stratagem. "It is one thing to take crowns, another thing to steal them," he claims to have said ; and it is stated that he told the Emperor that many irregularities, such

as mistresses, would be overlooked in a gentleman, but when he stooped to cheating at cards he forfeited the name. Napoleon went on to Paris, and Talleyrand returned to Valençay. The Emperor paid him 75,000 francs a year for the maintenance of the princes, but he seems to have treated them with real sympathy.

The task of entertaining them proved difficult. They had not a single accomplishment that counted in the code of a French gentleman. The attempt to interest them in books was a complete failure. Talleyrand did, indeed, notice with some consolation, that the pious uncle, Don Antonio, spent long hours in his valuable library, but he was more than disappointed when he discovered that the devout Spaniard had been cutting out the illustrations from rare old editions of the bible and the classics, to protect the morals of his nephews. It is usually said, and was certainly generally believed at Paris, that Don Carlos repaid his host by becoming the lover of Princess Talleyrand. "Spain was unlucky for both of us," said Napoleon to him when he heard this. But the anonymous biographer of the princess* points out that even Mme. de Rémusat (who detested the princess) does not expressly accuse them of more than a platonic affection, and claims that not a single stain rests on her character after she became Mme. Talleyrand. In any case, Talleyrand insisted that they should be treated as princes. Napoleon wrote to complain that Ferdinand was addressing him as "mon

* "Aus dem Eheleben eines Bischofs."

cousin," and directed that he be taught to write "Sire." "Ajaccio and St. Helena dispense with comment," says Talleyrand. When Colonel Henri, commanding the military guard, made himself officious, he told him that the Emperor did not rule at Valençay. But in the midst of his efforts to teach them to shoot and ride and read he was summoned to Paris. The princes parted from him with tears, and offered him their old prayer-books as souvenirs.

Napoleon had in February suggested a second conference with the Tsar. At that time he was offering Russia Constantinople and impelling it to a descent on India, was sending an army against Sweden, and was menacing the very existence of Prussia and Austria. He had a real idea of dividing the Old World with Russia, and excluding England from it. Then came news of the rising of the people of Spain against France, and the landing of the English in Portugal. Wellesley had begun his historic advance towards Paris; though few then dreamed of the end of it. The southern trouble upset Napoleon's calculations and diverted troops from the north. He fixed September 27th (1808) for the meeting with Alexander, and sent for Talleyrand to accompany him. He was weary of Champagne "coming every morning to excuse his blunders of the previous day," Talleyrand says. At all events, Talleyrand's experience at Tilsit and his friendship with Alexander recommended him. Napoleon directed all the documents to be sent to him, and met him with the most engaging

confidence and cordiality. He would remember later that Talleyrand was already talking to members of his Court of his "vile treachery" in Spain. Talleyrand studied the correspondence, and "at once made up his mind to prevent the spirit of enterprise from dominating this singular interview." In the circumstances we can hardly hold that his acceptance was an infringement of the dignity of his resignation. In any case, his position as Grand Chamberlain compelled him to go.

So in September Talleyrand found himself on the way to Erfurt with the vast apparatus that Napoleon had dispatched to impress his allies. The road from Paris was alive with couriers, carriages, officers and troops. Napoleon had ordered the whole of the Comédie Française to go. When Dazincourt asked if they were to play comedies or tragedies, he replied that comedy was not appreciated beyond the Rhine. Dazincourt suggested "Athalie" amongst other tragedies. "What do you mean?" he said. "Do you think I want to get Joas into the heads of these Germans?" "These Germans," he said to Talleyrand, "are still talking of d'Enghien. We must raise (*agrandir*) their standard of morality. I am not thinking of Alexander. Such things are nothing to a Russian. But we have to stir the men with melancholic ideas who abound in Germany." He meant thinkers like Goethe. They must "give tragedies like Cinna," and he sang the couplet :

Tous ces crimes d'État qu'on fait pour la couronne
Le ciel nous en absout alors qu'il nous la donne

The first actors and actresses and the first soldiers in Europe jostled each other on the route. Nothing was forgotten. One dignitary was included "to do the honours of our actresses for the Grand Duke Constantine."

— In giving Talleyrand instructions he said that he wanted a treaty which would pledge him to nothing in the Levant (the chief magnet with which he was drawing Alexander), secure the passivity of Austria, and leave him free to do what he liked in Spain and to attack England. Talleyrand drew one up in two days, which was fairly satisfactory, though not strong enough as regards Austria. His last direction to Talleyrand was to see Alexander often in private and feed his facile imagination with dreams. "There's a fine field for your philanthropic faculty ! I give you *carte blanche* in it—only let it be a sufficiently remote philosophy. Adieu !" There was just one point that the great impresario overlooked, or failed to appreciate enough—the change in Talleyrand's disposition. His Grand Chamberlain was now seriously determined to thwart him and save Austria. "If he had succeeded at Erfurt," Talleyrand says, "he would have picked a quarrel with Austria and dealt with it as he had done with Prussia." In the end he signed a totally different treaty from what he had intended, and the Tsar wrote a private letter to reassure the Emperor of Austria. Talleyrand claims, not incongruously, that he acted in Napoleon's true interest. —

To understand this result we have to examine the double current of life at Erfurt. While Alexander was

exposed to the full force of Napoleon's ingenious action every day, he was seeing Talleyrand privately every night and being put on his guard. Napoleon arrived on the morning of the 27th with some of his most brilliant regiments, the crowds having lined his route all night. By the time Alexander arrived, two days later, there were forty monarchs and dukes in Erfurt with their Courts. Napoleon told Talleyrand he was delighted with his first conversation with Alexander, but no business must be touched until the Tsar is thoroughly "dazed" with French magnificence. He had altered Talleyrand's treaty, making the terms more onerous for Austria. That night Talleyrand went to take tea with the Princess de la Tour et Taxis. Alexander followed in a quarter of an hour, and it was arranged that they should meet there every night after the opera. Talleyrand was also intimate with the Austrian ambassador, Baron Vincent, who was admitted at times to the nocturnal tea-party.

Thus the play proceeded. Napoleon artfully arranged long *déjeuners*, to be followed by hunts, reviews, or excursions that would last until dinner, and opera to close the day's work. There was no time to talk business. Every opera was selected by Napoleon. He foresaw the applause when, in "*Mahomet*," the line occurred :

"*Qui l'a fait roi ? Qui l'a couronné ? La victoire.*" The Grand Chamberlain saw Napoleon home every night (or early morning), and went at once to the house

of the discreet princess. After a few days Napoleon said to Alexander that they must speak of the treaty, and suggested that it should be kept to themselves. That night, when Alexander came to the princess's, he bade her guard the door, and pulled the treaty from his pocket. Talleyrand implored him not to be drawn into any engagement to the detriment of Austria. Napoleon complained to Talleyrand that he could "get nothing out of Alexander." He must leave Austria alone, and trust to scare it with the secret articles of the treaty. Talleyrand did not conceal his interest in Austria, but was told to continue to see Alexander, as Napoleon wanted to part on good terms. He did continue, with more effect than Napoleon imagined. When asked afterwards if he had not been imprudent, he replied : "I have never been betrayed by a woman." From the first day he had said to Alexander : "It is for you to save Europe by making a stand against Napoleon. The French nation is civilised, but its ruler is not ; the sovereign of Russia is civilised, but his people are not. The Russian monarch must unite with the French people."

It is idle casuistry to prove that this was not treachery to Napoleon. It was done in pursuit of a deliberate plan to thwart him in the interest of France. There was now in the mind of Talleyrand a broad and clear distinction between the needs of France and the ambition of its Emperor, or, if you will, Napoleon's view of its needs. Talleyrand's view is admitted to have

been more statesmanlike. The only question is whether Talleyrand was justified in accepting service under the Emperor with the determination to be disloyal to his personal views for the good of the country, if not in his own real interest. However that question may be answered, we must not ignore the bearing of these episodes on the chief charge against Talleyrand's character. Lord Brougham, in his otherwise admirable sketch, says that we cannot altogether admire a man who was "always on the side of success." But here we have Talleyrand wielding an opposition to Napoleon that would almost have cost him his life if it had become known, at the very summit of the Emperor's power, and in a purely patriotic and humane interest. The legendary Talleyrand would not have dared to do it—could not have conceived it. Napoleon never discovered precisely what passed in the princess's house, but he knew Talleyrand was meeting Alexander there, and that Talleyrand was a convinced pro-Austrian.

The Tsar obtained the provinces he wanted on the Danube without being pledged to more than an attack on Austria if she joined with England against France. In one other important matter Talleyrand more or less deceived Napoleon. The Emperor detained him one night with a pathetic reference to his childlessness, and at last "dropped the word divorce." He would like to marry one of Alexander's sisters, and Talleyrand might, "as a Frenchman," suggest the idea to the Tsar. Towards two o'clock he went to the

usual rendezvous, and found the Tsar telling the Princess with some feeling how Napoleon had that morning referred to his want of an heir. It had been "wrung from him." Talleyrand not only knew the alliance was impossible from the Russian point of view, but considered it inadvisable for the country. He told the Tsar of Napoleon's wish, and they agreed to humour him for the time by suggesting Anna, who was only fourteen years old.

The long series of fêtes and spectacles wore on meantime. One day Napoleon sent his actors to Weimar, and, after a hunt on the very field of Jena, entertained the princes to a banquet. The opera that night was unhappily chosen, "*La mort de César*," but a ball was added that "dissipated the impression." Napoleon made an effort to dazzle Goethe and Wieland with the brilliancy of his culture. Goethe made quiet and neat replies to the Emperor's forced and well-prepared sallies into literature. Talleyrand has preserved an account of the conversation, but omitted one of its best passages. When Napoleon said he did not like the end of "*Werther*," Goethe replied: "I did not know that your Majesty liked romances to have an end." Wieland took up the defence of Tacitus against Napoleon. "I agree," he said, "that his chief aim is to punish tyrants; but he denounces them to the justice of the ages and of the human race." When, on the day before his departure, the crowd of princes and nobles gathered about Napoleon—"I did

not see a single hand pass with any dignity over the lion's mane," says Talleyrand—he turned again to the literary men, and asked if they had any idealists in Germany. They had many. "I pity you," he replied. "These philosophers torture themselves with the creation of systems. They will search in vain for a better one than Christianity, which reconciles man with himself, and at the same time assures public order and the tranquility of States." The feelings of the "idealists" are not recorded. Talleyrand himself disappoints us. He had Goethe to dinner one evening, and does not reproduce a word of the conversation, or devote a single line to appreciation of the greatest man in that historic gathering.

When they returned from Paris Napoleon set out for Spain, and Talleyrand settled down to a life of comparative quiet. After leaving the Hotel Galiffet he had occupied a small house at the corner of the rue d'Anjou, but he now bought the large Hotel de Monaco in the rue de Varennes. His old friends, Narbonne and Choiseul, had returned to Paris and helped to restore in his magnificent salon the gaiety and wit of the earlier days. Other groups of the old nobility were forming, and no figure was more welcome amongst them than that of the ex-bishop. At the Duchess de Laval's he met once more the Duchess de Luynes, the Duchess de Fitzjames, the Countess Jaucourt, Mme. de Bauffremont, and many another great lady of the past and great admirer of himself. The Countess Tyszkiewicz, who had "caught the

complaint of falling in love with Talleyrand" at Warsaw, brought a strong accession of fervour to the cult. The old society of Paris was forming the nucleus of the new, and, with a dim consciousness of their work, preparing the scene for the next act in the history of France. From these brilliant and envied centres daring witticisms crept abroad and began to circulate in Paris. The Napoleonic Court, the new Foreign Minister, the campaign in Spain, the succession to the throne, were fruitful in enlivening topics of conversation over the tea or whist tables. Possibly the story of Erfurt was discreetly told; certainly the story of the Archduchess Anna would prove irrepressible. There were more serious matters. It was observed that Talleyrand was reconciled with Fouché, and it was known that they were daring to speculate on the contingency of a Spanish ball finding its way to the Emperor's heart; though the kinder of the myth-makers declare that the object of the new conspiracy was merely the heart of a certain pretty lady.

By this time the Bonapartes and the Beauharnais hated Talleyrand. He had never concealed his small estimate of Napoleon's brothers. "Say what you like about my family," said the Emperor with a laugh, when he asked Talleyrand to speak to Alexander about his want of an heir. He also warned him that Josephine knew he favoured a divorce. They and the Foreign Minister, and every other Napoleonist that had been made a butt of royalist wit, now joined in reporting to the Emperor, when he returned in January, the latest

misdeeds of the Faubourg St. Germain. Talleyrand had written amiable letters to Napoleon in Spain. He had congratulated him on his victories (with, we must remember, the usual hope that they will be made a step to peace and the real good of Spain), and encouraged his political action in Paris. The Corps Legislatif was giving trouble, and Talleyrand agreed that it might be extinguished without tyranny. In a country like France it was only necessary to have sufficient popular representation to vote supplies. When, therefore, Napoleon heard of the satirical comments on his campaign and the friendship of Talleyrand and Fouché, he determined to strike.

On the day following his return, when Talleyrand and the other Court dignitaries came before him, he opened the sluices of his Corsican oratory. "He became a sub-lieutenant once more," says Meneval in recalling his language. In the general confusion Talleyrand alone stood "like a rock," though the Emperor even threatened to strike him. To Napoleon's brutal observation: "You did not tell me that the Duke of San Carlos was your wife's lover," he quietly retorted: "I did not think it redounded either to your Majesty's honour or mine." When the Duchess de Laval asked him afterwards why he did not knock Napoleon down with the tongs, he said he was "too lazy." The only remark he made to those present, when the Emperor had exhausted himself and departed, was: "What a pity that such a great man had not a better education."

We are often asked at this juncture by Talleyrand's biographers to deplore the lack of self-respect that he betrayed in *not* seizing the tongs, or returning the torrent of rhetoric. If he had been a bishop the same writers would ask us to admire his superhuman fortitude. The general reader will probably prefer an intermediate attitude. The aphorism quoted by Lord Acton, that such conduct belongs to one who is either more or less than man, is pretty but absurd.

It is just four years from the date of this incident to Talleyrand's last interview with Napoleon. Those four years are full of adventure and life for the Napoleonist writer, but they offer little material to the biographer of Talleyrand. Throughout them the scene is being prepared for the next act. Wellesley is slowly forcing his way towards the Pyrenees. The coalition against England is gradually being converted into the final coalition against Napoleon. Parisian society is falling into two definite groups, Napoleonists and people who whisper to each other that the Emperor has no guarantee of immortality—"passengers," in the words which Metternich applies to Talleyrand and Fouché; "passengers who see the helm in the hands of a reckless pilot steering straight for the reefs, and are ready to seize the tiller as soon as the first shock knocks down the helmsman."

Talleyrand is still, it will be remembered, Vice-Grand Elector, and member of the Supreme Council. But after January, 1809, he has little influence on

the fortunes of France, and is continually offending the Emperor. His personal relation to Napoleon is curious. Michaud says that on the morning after the storm of January 23rd, he was one of the first to appear at the levee, and observers could see no trace of the events of the previous day in his bearing. The Emperor himself said to Roederer a few days later that "his feelings towards Talleyrand were unchanged," and he would "leave him his dignities," but would not have him closely associated as Chamberlain. The last letter of Talleyrand to Napoleon that we have, dated April, 1809, is full of amiability and ostensible devotion. Three years later, when he loses nearly the whole of his fortune, he applies to the Emperor through Savary, and receives two million francs for his hotel. In that year Napoleon even wanted to recall him to the conduct of affairs. It seems as if the two men retained, below all their political differences and personal friction, a softening memory of their joint achievements. But their divergence in policy was too serious to admit further co-operation. Napoleon saw all his hated enemies in Paris gather about the Hotel Talleyrand, and set his spies upon it. Talleyrand saw the Emperor reel fatally towards the precipice.

In the long and adventurous negotiations with the Pope in 1809 and 1810 Talleyrand had no part. He saw Napoleon as "successor of Charlemagne," confiscate the last of the temporal power, and the Ecclesiastical Council at Paris (November 16th, 1809, to January 11th, 1810) trim and writhe before Napoleon's theological

queries.* He was present when several of the bishops were summoned to Saint Cloud, after Napoleon had read an unsatisfactory account of the opening of their second Council. Napoleon sat in the midst of his Court, drinking coffee poured out by the Empress, and singled out his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, for one of his characteristic attacks. But "the Corsair (Fesch had fitted out more than one privateer in 1793-5) re-appeared at times under the cassock of the Archbishop." The reply was as Corsican as the attack. Napoleon rushed on from blunder to blunder in the historical and theological matters he was daring to discuss. "You take me for Louis le Debonnaire," he roared, "I'm not. I'm Charlemagne." The negotiations came to nothing, and the bishops were informed "by the minister of police" that they might return to their dioceses.

Talleyrand was an idle but disgusted witness of the subsequent abduction of the Pope, and the final defeat of Napoleon's aims. In January, 1810, he was present with all the other great dignitaries and ministers at the conference on the divorce of Josephine and re-marriage of the Emperor. Few knew, as Talleyrand did, that

* Such as the following: "His Majesty, who may justly regard himself as the most powerful of living Christians, would feel his conscience aggrieved if he paid no attention to the complaints of the German Churches, which the Pope has neglected these ten years. As Suzerain of Germany, heir of Charlemagne, real Emperor of the West, and eldest son of the Church, he desires to know what conduct he ought to pursue for re-establishing religion amongst the peoples of Germany." What he wanted, the bishops and cardinals knew but dared not suggest, was a sanction of the secularisations.

there was really no question of a Russian marriage, when Napoleon put it to them as an open question. When it came to his turn to speak, he advocated an alliance with Austria. Napoleon thanked and dismissed them ; and a courier was dispatched to Vienna the same evening. Talleyrand was present at the marriage in April. He heard the bells of Notre Dame ring out the ecclesiastical share in the general joy at a time when the Pope was Napoleon's prisoner, and listened to Austrian congratulations at a moment when the fortifications of Vienna were being blown up at the order of its conqueror. A month or two afterwards he again gave offence to the Emperor. Fouché had been detected in negotiation with England, and Napoleon consulted his Council as to the advisability of punishing him. Most of the members thought Fouché should be deposed, but could suggest no substitute for that astute chief detective. Talleyrand said to his neighbour in a stage-whisper : " Fouché has certainly done very wrong, and I would find a substitute for him—but it would be Fouché himself." This led to Napoleon's last extant letter to him. " Prince of Benevento, I have received your letter, the contents of which pained me. During your term of office I voluntarily shut my eyes to many things. I regret that you should have thought fit to take a step that revives the memory of what I have endeavoured, and will still endeavour, to forget." The air of righteous forbearance is imposing.

In the spring of 1812 the difference between the two seemed to be bridged for a time. Talleyrand was generously assisted by the Emperor in a grave financial crisis, of which I will speak presently, and accepted an appointment from him to a political mission. With the long story of Napoleon's rupture with Russia and the opening of a fresh campaign in 1812 I am not concerned. The friction between the two Emperors turned largely on the question of Poland, and Napoleon resolved to send Talleyrand on a secret mission to that country. Some affirm that he cancelled the appointment when he learned that Talleyrand had let it become known to Austria by sending to Vienna for a supply of ducats. It is likely enough that Talleyrand would think an accidental disclosure of his mission the safest way to avoid incurring the displeasure of Russia or Austria. Bulwer Lytton, however, says that Napoleon did not press the appointment because he found it difficult to adjust with the position of his Foreign Minister, who was to accompany him on the campaign. However that may be, the Emperor does not seem to have felt any particular resentment. He set out to face Russia. It was immediately whispered in Paris that Talleyrand declared it "the beginning of the end."

Since his deposition from the chamberlainship in 1809 Talleyrand had spent a large proportion of his time in the country. He had never been a saving man. He liked to surround himself with things of great beauty, to entertain lavishly, and to be extremely generous to

servants and friends. Until 1809 he had granted a pension of 60,000 a year to his mother,* and greatly helped other members of his family. He had now only the income from his savings, and his salary as Vice-Grand Elector. His establishment in Paris, the huge Hotel Monaco, was very exacting; Valençay was maintained by the Emperor for his Spanish "guests." Savary tells us that Talleyrand's affairs were somewhat straitened from 1810 onwards, and he had often to appeal for the payments for Valençay. In the general depression of 1812 a house failed in which he was interested, and he lost fourteen million francs. Savary says that he appealed through him to the Emperor, who sent his architect to value the Hotel Monaco with all its furniture, and paid him 2,100,000 francs for it. The act was a very generous one in the circumstances, though it is perhaps not ungracious to recall that Napoleon's plans were responsible for the deep commercial depression of the time. Talleyrand happened to have a debt owing from the former Spanish ambassador, and he now accepted that nobleman's mansion, the Hotel St. Florentin, in discharge of it.†

* She refused this when he married Mme. Grand. Talleyrand, with great delicacy and generosity, continued to pay it, unknown to her, through his brother!

† I have earlier described the sale of Talleyrand's first library at London in 1794. I have seen a second catalogue, of the year 1816, in which the library of a "foreign nobleman, distinguished for his diplomatic talents," is put up at Sotheby's. This must have been taken as a reference to Talleyrand, and the King's librarian explicitly describes the books as his. The sale lasted eighteen days and produced £8,000. But it is almost impossible to believe that the library was Talleyrand's. The books are described as having been consigned from France in 1814, and as the

This hotel now became the centre of discontent, while the salon of the Duchess de Bassano was the centre of Napoleonism.

The following year, 1813, saw considerable movement in the political barometers at Paris. Napoleon had returned from Moscow about the middle of December, and the remnants of the grand army were beginning to reach France when he called a special council in January to discuss the situation. He told those present—chiefly the heads of the foreign office and retired foreign ministers—that he desired peace, but was in a position still to wage successful war. Should he await overtures from Russia, or open negotiations himself, either directly or through Austria? Maret, the actual Foreign Minister, even less competent than Champagny, advocated negotiations through Austria. Talleyrand knew that Austria was seeking to detach itself from Napoleon, and to pose as armed mediator. He therefore gave the loyal counsel to open serious negotiations for peace directly with Russia. To do this with any profit, however, it would be necessary now to sacrifice some of France's outlying conquests, and Napoleon would not give up even the duchy of Warsaw, and would not withdraw from Spain unless England withdrew from Sicily. As Talleyrand happily expressed it a little later, the only hope of safety for Napoleon was for him "to

finest collection ever put at auction. By that time Talleyrand's anxiety was over, and he could not have taken the extreme step of selling a superb library. Either the books were *sold* in 1812, or they were not Talleyrand's.



TALLEYRAND
(In middle age).

become King of France." This was impossible for him. Talleyrand retired to his hotel, to play whist with Louis, Dalberg, and de Pradt, and to keep his eyes open.

Within a few weeks the whist-players hear that the people of Prussia have arisen and forced their ruler to take up the war against Napoleon, and that Austria had concluded a truce with Russia and withdrawn its troops. In April they see Napoleon set out for Metz, with no word from his Austrian ally. In May the Napoleonists illuminate—somewhat hastily. The Emperor has won Lutzen and Bautzen, at a terrible cost, and concluded a forty days' armistice. In June the Bassano Hotel darkens again, when the news comes that England has allied itself with Sweden, Russia, and Prussia, and that Wellington is sweeping the French out of the Peninsula. In August it is reported that Napoleon has rejected the terms offered by Austria as armed mediator, and she has joined with the continent against France. There is a momentary flutter when a victory is claimed for the Emperor at Dresden, but before the end of October comes the news of Leipzig, and the tea-tables and whist-tables buzz with excited whispers. For the second time in twelve months the Emperor is flying towards France with the remnant of a grand army.

Napoleon arrived in Paris on November 9th. His spies and supporters could bring no allegation against Talleyrand, who had become a very quiet spectator. Though Napoleon's outlying empire was virtually lost, the allies disclaimed any intention of deposing him.

If he had been content to retire within the natural frontiers of France, the Alps, the Rhine, and the Pyrenees, the divisions amongst the allies would have at this juncture sufficed to give him peace. Sick of the mediocrity of Champagny and Maret, he now offered the foreign ministry again to Talleyrand, who refused it, saying later to Savary that he "did not care to bury himself in ruins." As he writes in his memoirs, Napoleon was only ruined in the sense that he could not forego his conquests and become "King of France." Talleyrand had no intention of flattering his hope that a fresh co-operation of the two would again break up the coalition and restore the empire. It must be firmly remembered that there was at this time no question of restoring the Bourbons. Talleyrand was well in the counsels of Austria and Russia, and knew that the declaration of the Allies was sincere. His refusal meant a fresh protest against the incurable megalomania of the Emperor. Lytton, who proves that Talleyrand was at the time trying to inspire the Emperor with thoughts of peace and moderation (and we know from Pasquier that he even sent word to Napoleon of the impending desertion of Bavaria), says that the foreign ministry was offered to him on condition that he gave up his other office and its salary. This, he points out, would have made him entirely dependent on a co-operation with Napoleon's policy.

From another and well-informed source, Mme. de Rémusat, we learn that Talleyrand and Napoleon were

discussing the Spanish situation in a friendly way. "You consult me as if we were not on bad terms," said Talleyrand. "Circumstances, circumstances," replied the Emperor; "let us leave the past and the future and come to the present." "Very well," said Talleyrand, "you have no choice. You have made a mistake, and you must say so, and, as far as possible, say it with dignity." He advised the Emperor to declare that his object had been "to free the Spanish people from the yoke of a detested minister," and that he was now willing to restore the dynasty and withdraw his troops. The tone of the conversation, as given in *Mme. Rémusat*, is quite inconsistent with the notion that Talleyrand had urged the invasion of Spain. The *Duc de Bassano* (*Maret*) declares that he persuaded the Emperor to make Ferdinand's return conditional on the consent of the Spanish Regency, and so delayed the return for some months, and threw away the Emperor's chance of peace. We must remember how *Maret* had smarted under Talleyrand's criticisms. "I never saw a greater donkey than *Maret*—unless it was the *Duc de Bassano*," he once said. We know from a private letter to the *Duchess of Courland* that Talleyrand foresaw and forewarned Napoleon of the reluctance of the Regency. We also know from *Roederer* that he urged in December the unconditional return of Ferdinand to Spain. Napoleon wanted to release his armies from the Peninsula, but at the same time to keep the English from passing on to France.

It was his own vacillation between his hopes and fears that prevented him from making definite terms. Over and over again at this period he falls back on Talleyrand's advice, a month or so after the situation has changed against him, and the Allies will no longer entertain it.*

The Spanish princes left Valençay on March 3rd. Castellane says that there was not a piece of furniture or china intact in the chateau after their six years' stay. They left a memorial in the shape of their medieval chariot, which declined to move towards its ancestral home, and was long exhibited at Valençay. Talleyrand writes a singularly bitter passage on the English in describing Ferdinand's return. He complains that, while they boasted of being "the saviours of Spain," they failed to secure proper guarantees that the unamiable Ferdinand should not abuse his power on returning. "They only hate tyranny abroad when, as under Napoleon, it threatens their existence, and they love to make the subjection of peoples turn to the profit of their pride and their prosperity." One would like to know the state of his health when he wrote this very exceptional sentence.

* Napoleonists are naturally very ready with accusations against Talleyrand at this time. Maret, besides impugning his advice in the matter of Ferdinand, hints that he secretly sent word to the Allies of the state of feeling in France, and the slight resistance the Emperor could make to their advance. It is impossible to weigh seriously irresponsible charges of that kind. Still less serious is Bourrienne's statement that he advised Napoleon to win over the Duke of Wellington by offering him the throne of Spain. Such a suggestion ought to enable English readers to appreciate fully the recklessness of Napoleonist charges against Talleyrand.

The last interview with Napoleon was tempestuous. In January (1814), a few days before he rejoined the army, the Emperor again chose a public occasion to abuse him, and threatened to punish him severely on the first complaint. "You are a coward, a traitor, a thief. You don't even believe in God. You have betrayed and deceived everybody. You would sell your own father." Talleyrand stood quietly by the fire; not a muscle of his face or body was seen to move. One of the witnesses told Lytton that he seemed to be the last person in the room interested in what the Emperor said. His critics enlarge here again on his "lack of self-respect." There could not be a more perverse and malevolent interpretation of an admirable bearing. On this occasion, however, Talleyrand immediately wrote to the Emperor offering to resign his place on the Council. It was not accepted. Napoleon had told him some time before that if anything happened to himself he would see that Talleyrand did not survive him. Within a few months he used language which almost implied a regret that he had not had Talleyrand shot. They never saw each other again. In less than three months the Empire was at an end.

In a private letter written immediately after this incident Talleyrand spoke of it with great moderation and sadness. His correspondent was the Duchess of Courland, who now appears, almost for the first time, in the story of his life. There is no other woman who has been addressed by him with such passionate and devoted

language as this beautiful Russo-German princess. After the death of her husband in 1801 she lived chiefly at Mittau, but paid an occasional visit to Paris. It must have been during one of these visits that Talleyrand first met her. We do not know the year, but it cannot have been long before he sought the hand of her daughter for his nephew in 1808. She would then be in her forty-seventh year, and her daughter, Dorothy, in her fifteenth. The romanticists (strongly reinforced in this instance by the fertile imagination of George Sand) have, of course, given a sensual character to the attachment, and have thrown out ludicrous hints that Dorothy (born years before we have any reason to think he had met the duchess at all), who succeeded the mother in his affections, was his daughter. All this is pure wantonness. We can understand without their aid the ardent friendship that we find in 1814 between the refined statesman of sixty and the graceful and gracious lady of fifty-three. She was a woman of great charm, many accomplishments, high intelligence and character, and no mean political faculty. "No woman in the world was more worthy of adoration," said Talleyrand long afterwards. The score of short letters he wrote her during 1814 are full of such expressions as "my angel."

CHAPTER XIV

THE RESTORATION

NAPOLÉON had left Paris for the field towards the close of January, and the strain of expectation became intense. All knew now that the empire trembled in the balance. The English and Spaniards had crossed the Pyrenees since the middle of November, and were welcomed by the peasants of the south as deliverers. The northern allies had crossed the Rhine on December 21st. Already the imagination could see Napoleon and his capital hemmed between the converging forces. The group of whist-players at the Hotel St. Florentin dropped their voices to lower whispers, as the news came stealthily through the screen of spies and censors. "Burn this letter" appears time after time at the foot of the brief notes to the Duchess of Courland. In one letter he tells her that he has sent a totally different and misleading message by post, because he knows it will be opened. Another, probably sent by post instead of the usual friendly bearer, ends with the postscript: "My letters are opened. Those who read them will discover that I love you, which concerns you and me alone. After all, I only send news that is being cried in the streets. This interruption

of a confidential exchange of thoughts is sad for those who wish to renounce the affairs of the world."

The thoughts of the hermit were then as vigorously bent on "the affairs of the world" as ever in his whole career. Was the future to be a Napoleon with clipped wings? Was it to be a regency? Bernadotte? the Bourbons? He had several channels of information, and was not affected by the rigid censorship that ruled Paris. He knew well the march of military events, but was painfully perplexed as to the political view of the Allies. He holds in his memoirs that up to the middle of March they were prepared to treat with Napoleon, and hardly gave a thought to the Bourbons. But the Emperor was obstinate. He saw with rage the vast empire slipping from his grasp. At the beginning of February he sent his Foreign Minister to treat with the Allies at Chatillon, but as usual insisted on terms too arrogant for his situation. "Talleyrand would have got me out of the difficulty," he said, when he heard of Caulaincourt's failure. It was not the first time the remark had been wrung from him. But Talleyrand rightfully says he could have done nothing of the kind. If the Emperor had gained a slight success the day after Talleyrand had secured reasonable terms, he would have disowned them.

The "table de whist"—a phrase of the time—listened to the daily messages with great impatience. "The man is a corpse, but he doesn't stink yet," said Dalberg of Napoleon. "All he can hope for now,"

said de Pradt, Archbishop of Malines, another of the inner group, "is a million francs and a frigate at Brest." Talleyrand kept quiet, but wrote to the Duchess of Courland that "uncertainty was the worst of all evils." He was being closely watched. One day in the middle of February he and Baron Louis, Mgr. de Pradt, and Dalberg were discussing the situation, when Savary, the new detective-in-chief, burst into the room. "Ah!" he said, with a forced laugh, "I catch you all red-handed." Towards the end of February they sent Baron Vitrolles, a royalist, to the representatives of the Allies to glean something of their intention as to the future. Dalberg gave him as credentials his seal and the names of two Viennese ladies who were known to Count Stadion. When Vitrolles asked if he was to have no message from Talleyrand, Dalberg said: "You don't know that monkey: he won't risk burning his finger tips, even if all the chestnuts go to himself." He was, however, given a short, unsigned note in invisible ink for Count Nesselrode.

Talleyrand was already secretly assured of the goodwill of Louis XVIII. Several years earlier, when someone suggested that he ought to have an understanding with the possible king, he replied that his uncle, the Archbishop, was at Hartwell. At the same time he discharged his duties as Councillor of the Empress to the best of his judgment. Napoleon had warned Joseph against his advice, and had even ordered Savary to expel him. Savary refused on the ground

that Talleyrand alone kept the Faubourg St. Germain in check.

Towards the close of March news came that the allied forces were marching on Paris—were already between Napoleon and his capital. Country folk began to pour in, flying before the advancing Prussians and Russians. On the evening of the 28th Joseph assembled the Council at the Tuileries for the last time. Talleyrand advised that the Empress should remain in Paris. He spoke on a perfectly loyal and judicious estimate of the circumstances, and nearly every member of the Council agreed with him. Then Joseph read a letter from his brother, directing the retreat of the Empress and her son to Blois. The members of the Council were to follow. As Talleyrand left the room he halted for a moment at the top of the staircase, and said to Savary: "So this is the end of it all! Don't you think so? The Emperor is to be pitied, but he will get no sympathy, because his obstinacy in retaining such incompetent people about him has no reasonable motive. What a fool! To give his name to an adventure, when he might have given it to his age. We must see what is to be done. It is not everybody who cares to bury himself in these ruins." The following day he sent two envoys to the head-quarters of the Allies at Dijon. He gave them a letter of introduction to Stein, who was in favour of a restoration of the Bourbons, and who was urged "to prevent the frightful consequences of a wrong choice."

Faster ran the pace when, on the morning of the 30th, the allied armies reached the outskirts of Paris. All that day the roar of artillery and the rattle of musketry kept people in suspense. At night Marshals Marmont and Mortier came in, black with dust and smoke, and it was agreed to capitulate. Talleyrand had been ordered to follow the Empress to Blois, as a member of her Council. He asked Savary to authorise him to stay, but the Minister refused, and instructed the police to see that he went. Pasquier, however, mentioned to him the barrier at which Rémusat commanded, and Talleyrand, sending a message to his friend Mme. de Rémusat, set out with great ceremony in his state carriage. He was, of course, forbidden to pass the barrier, and returned to the Hotel St. Florentin. In his judgment Napoleon was not yet certified to be dead. Michaud, the devoted leader of the "true royalists" in Paris, who were contemptuously ignored by Talleyrand, says the crowd wanted to pitch him in the Seine. Michaud was to write Talleyrand's biography as soon as he was dead, and it was to be taken as authoritative by judicious people like Sainte Beuve.

At eight in the morning Count Nesselrode and a Cossack enter Paris, and gallop between the great crowds to the Hotel St. Florentin. Talleyrand, just dressing, covers the Russian envoy with embraces and powder. While they are talking, a message comes from the Tsar to say that he hears the Elysée Palace, in

which he was to stay, has been undermined. Talleyrand puts his hotel at the Tsar's disposal. Nesselrode and he redact a proclamation, and entrust the printing of it to Michaud. At two in the afternoon Caulaincourt comes from Napoleon. At four the allied forces defile along the Champs Elysées, and Alexander arrives. He had previously given orders that Talleyrand was to be detained, by force, if necessary, at Paris ; he was the necessary man. Michaud admits that his activity was "prodigious" that day. In the evening Alexander, the King of Prussia, Prince Schwartzemberg and others discussed the situation with Talleyrand and Dalberg. Talleyrand demanded the restoration of the monarchy. "With the return of the Bourbons France would cease to be gigantic, and would become great once more." To the foreigners he pointed out that the only alternative to Napoleon that rested on a principle was the re-establishment of the Bourbons. The Tsar was not at all convinced that the country wanted the Bourbons, but Talleyrand promised to get a vote of the Senate to that effect, and produced the Declaration he had printed. When Napoleon's envoy arrived to treat with the Allies, Alexander showed him the Declaration. The reign of Napoleon was over. Talleyrand had restored the monarchy. Napoleon remarked when he heard it : "Talleyrand was a good servant. I treated him badly without making him powerless. It was a great mistake. Now he has taken his revenge on me. The Bourbons will avenge me by throwing him over within six months."

There is no trace in the whole of Talleyrand's career of "revenge." It was, like zeal, one of the passions he thought it unprofitable to cultivate. He restored the monarchy, partly because he knew Napoleon, partly because he did not yet know Louis XVIII. He knew Napoleon would never sit in peace within the old frontiers of France, or refrain from meddling with a regency. Castellane rightly points out that he had much to fear under Louis, but would have had an assured influence under a regency. He acted in what must have seemed to be the interest of the country.

He at once set to work to secure the allegiance of Paris. Bourrienne, Pasquier, and others quickly deserted Napoleon. He won over many of the senators in Paris, and sent his friends to others. When the Senate met under his presidency on April 1st, it appointed a provisional government consisting of—Michaud bitterly says—"the whist-table," and a few others. Talleyrand was president, with Dalberg, Jaucourt, Beurnonville, and Montesquiou as colleagues, and Louis and Beugnot and others as ministers. Michaud says they helped themselves freely to the funds. Talleyrand claims that their provisional administration was a miracle of economy. Its budget for seventeen busy days was only two million francs. On the following day the Senate deposed Napoleon, with rather needless emphasis. The Legislative Body supported it. Benjamin Constant wrote to congratulate Talleyrand on having "at once destroyed tyranny and laid the foundations of liberty."

"There is a noble consistency in your life," he said, "between 1789 and 1814." *

Talleyrand was in good spirits when he saw the smooth run of events. His friend de Pradt was piqued at being left out of the provisional government, and complained that he had no opportunity of helping. Talleyrand recollected that it was April 1st. He told de Pradt that he could render great assistance by joining in an attempt to evoke a royalist demonstration. They were both to leave the hotel waving their white handkerchiefs, and proceed in different directions along the boulevards. Talleyrand returned to the hotel as soon as de Pradt's back was turned, and left the Archbishop to run the gauntlet of the crowd with his Bourbon flag. The National Guard had refused to replace the tricolour by the white cockade.†

But there were more anxious hours before the final settlement. Napoleon had still a considerable force, and talked of retaking Paris. On April 4th his marshals forced him to abdicate in favour of his son, and three of them came to the Hotel St. Florentin to inform the Tsar. The provisional government was at that moment

* The drama would not be complete without the suggestion of a plot on Talleyrand's part to assassinate Napoleon. I will deal with this later.

† A stupid story is told by Vaulabelle, and greatly embroidered by some of the romanticists, that the Duchess of Courland's daughter was seen joining in wild orgies on the night of April 2nd, and riding on horseback behind a Cossack. One of Talleyrand's letters to the duchess unconsciously reveals the germ of this monstrous story. Talleyrand had sent a Cossack escort to accompany her back to Paris from Rosny that evening on account of the mob.

assembled in Talleyrand's rooms on the ground floor, and had drawn up the invitation to the King's brother to advance to Paris. Alexander now spoke again in favour of a regency, and Talleyrand replied that it would mean the Napoleonic rule in disguise. The Tsar wavered between the politicians and the soldiers, until at last a messenger broke in on the discussion with the news that one of Napoleon's generals had deserted with 12,000 men. On the 5th the Allies rejected Napoleon's proposal ; on the 6th the Senate proclaimed Louis XVIII, and Napoleon abdicated at Fontainebleau.

Then began the pitiful story of the men who "forgot nothing and learned nothing," the King and his emigrant courtiers. Imagining that Europe had, out of respect for the divine right of kings, drawn the flat of its style over the tablets of the last twenty years, they marched into France without a glance at the real spirit of the people. A messenger came to tell Talleyrand that the Count d'Artois would make his entry into Paris on April 12th as the King's deputy. Talleyrand calmly told him he was ready to hand over the reins of the provisional government to him. He had worked with the Senate for days at a constitution after the model of the English, with a hereditary Senate, an elective second chamber, freedom of worship, and open access to office for all Frenchmen. They invited the late King's brother to ascend the throne as soon as he would adopt on oath the new constitution. This meant to the infatuated royalists that the roots of republicanism were still alive.

The Tsar was less patient of their folly than Talleyrand. He gave them to understand that the King would forfeit the support of Europe if he did not accept the constitution; though Talleyrand admitted the possibility of changes in detail.

The Count d'Artois greeted Talleyrand with cordiality, and was too overcome with emotion to do more than stammer an expression of his joy. Beugnot tells how Talleyrand directed him afterwards to report, or rather construct, the scene for the *Moniteur*. After several attempts Beugnot made the Prince say: "Nothing is changed. There is one Frenchman more in France—that is all." "That is what he *did* say," said Talleyrand; "I answer for it." The pretty speech—leagues removed from the real one—was scattered over the country in the *Moniteur*. Talleyrand had once defended d'Artois against Napoleon's disdain, but he now saw with concern that the Prince's watch had stopped at 1789. To the address of the Senate, delivered by Talleyrand, he only replied with a vague assurance that the King would be sure to accept the main lines of their constitution. Dispatching a Liberal noble, the Duke de Liancourt, to Hartwell, Talleyrand turned to the negotiations with the Allies until the King should arrive.

When someone had expressed to him a fear that the King might prove unreasonable, Talleyrand replied optimistically that Nature had put a man's eyes in front, not at the back, of his head. It was, however, with

grave misgiving that he went to meet Louis XVIII at Compiègne on April 29th. Cold, cynical and selfish in person, surrounded by evil and incompetent councillors, folded complacently in the outworn mantle of Capetian divinity, Louis XVIII came rather with an idea of forgiveness than of conciliation. He had enough perception of the situation to admit in the letter some scheme of constitutional monarchy, but he had not surrendered a particle of the medieval doctrine of divine right. Nothing was more remote from his mind than the idea of receiving sovereignty from the people and holding it on their conditions. With such a man co-operation was only possible as long as Talleyrand could prove himself to be indispensable. He was steeped in the convenient fiction that ministers serve the crown, so that its wearer escapes the burden of ingratitude. For such men Talleyrand would soon say, bitterly enough, "By the grace of God" is a protocol of ingratitude. As to the King's surroundings he had no illusion. When someone asked him whether he thought them capable of saving France, he replied: "Why not? The geese saved the Capitol."

King and king-maker met at the royal chateau of Compiègne. Talleyrand declares that the King received him with compliments; an eye-witness, Beugnot, describes him as ironically polite and very kingly.*

* Talleyrand probably gives the more correct version. Both he and Beugnot make the King say: "We were the cleverer. If you had been so, you would say to me: 'Let us sit down and talk.' Instead of that I say to you: 'Take a seat and talk to me.'" Talleyrand says the King

When Talleyrand broached the subject of the constitution, the King brushed aside his plea for tact and consideration with a courtly sneer. "You wish me to accept a constitution from you, and you don't wish to accept a constitution from me. That is very natural; but in that case, my dear M. Talleyrand, I should be standing and you seated." Talleyrand saw that his worst fears as to the conduct of the returned emigrants—whom he would soon call "the foreigners of the interior"—were likely to be realised. In the end the King asked him, with some suspicion of irony, how he had been able to upset in succession the Directory and Bonaparte. Talleyrand saw his opportunity. "I did nothing at all, Sire," he replied. "There seems to be an inexplicable something in me that brings bad luck to governments that neglect me." This, at all events, is the current version of the interview. The mythopæic faculty has evidently been at work. It is safe to assume that the King was cold, cynical, polite and tactless.

Two days later the Tsar reached Compiègne, and endeavoured in vain to induce the King to surrender his illusions. The Senate was also brought from Paris, and was introduced by Talleyrand. "You succeed to twenty years of ruin and misery. Such a heritage might

was speaking of their remote ancestors and the relative positions their families had won in France. Beugnot would have it that the emigrant party had been the cleverer in 1789. But it is impossible to understand the words in this sense. They would imply that Talleyrand had aimed at the throne.



From an engraving, after the picture by Huet Villiers.

LOUIS XVIII.

[p. 292.]

frighten an ordinary virtue," he said gravely to the pompous mediocrity before him. His sense of humour seems to have failed him when, after pleading for a "constitutional charter," he went on : "*You* know even better than we do, Sire, that such institutions, so well approved among a neighbouring people, lend support to, and do not put restraint on, monarchs who love the laws and are the fathers of their people." It was all of very little avail. An English caricature of the time represents the banquet at Compiègne that night, with the Tsar, the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, Prince Schwartzemberg, Blücher, Bernadotte, and the leading figures amongst the Allies and in France around the tables. Talleyrand sits in silence at one end of the room, but a thread passes from his hand to each of the other diners, as if they were puppets under his control. The truth is that Talleyrand had now encountered one of the most serious difficulties of his career. All his diplomacy fell before the royal system of filling the ante-chamber with sleek, cunning, incompetent favourites and flatterers. The King refused to take the oath to the new constitution, or to adopt the moderate proclamation prepared by Talleyrand. His satellites prepared one more in accord with his inflated pretensions—the Declaration of St. Ouen—and posted it throughout Paris. It gave a constitution to the nation instead of receiving one from the people's representatives. Providence had restored the throne, and to Providence, rather than statesmanship, it was to be

confided. In ten months the king would be flying ignobly for the frontier.

However, Louis XVIII had accepted the substance of Talleyrand's constitution, and he gave the guarantees which were to dispel the expectation of vindictiveness. Talleyrand returned to Paris to prepare for his reception, which was at least orderly. A few days afterwards he was appointed Foreign Minister and Grand Almoner to the King's household. There is a story that after he had taken the oath of loyalty to the King he observed to him: "That is my thirteenth oath of loyalty, Sire, and I trust it will be the last." History had another in reserve for him—the oath to Louis Philippe. Although he afterwards spoke strongly of the peers who had "violated the religion of the oath" during the Hundred Days, he had not a great awe of that ceremony. He is said to have described it once as "the ticket you take at the door of the theatre." Speaking once of cheeses, he declared that the Brie was the king of cheeses; he had thought so in his youth and thought so still. Eugène Sue observed that he had "taken no oath to that royalty." On another occasion, when he had to administer the oath to a pretty lady, he said, with a glance at her ankles: "That is a very short skirt to take an oath of fidelity in."

Not only was Talleyrand omitted from the committee appointed to frame the new constitution, but its members were strictly forbidden to confer with him on the subject. He was jealously excluded from influence

on home affairs, and he saw with increasing bitterness the gradual emergence of the worst faults of the old regime. One of the restored nobles went about complaining that he did not feel free as long as the press was free. Another was advocating that the King's ministers must be "people of quality," with the real workers as drudges under their control. But the task of completing the settlement with the Allies still engrossed his attention for some time. Barante describes how Nesselrode or Metternich or other ministers would drop in as Talleyrand was dressing in the morning, and discuss the situation. It was no light work to effect a generous settlement, with the King forcing on him exorbitant pretensions and the Prussians thirsting to avenge Jena. Talleyrand succeeded by his personal influence in attaching England and Austria, and so defeating the righteous demands of Prussia. In the end he was able to hand over to the King a considerably larger France than Louis XVI had ruled, an army of 300,000 men, all the works of art that the Directory and Napoleon had "imported," and a complete acquittance of all claims for indemnity. While foreign ministers were being severely censured for admitting such terms, Talleyrand had to listen to vapid complaints of their insufficiency amongst the Court party. The King's young nephew, the Duc de Berry, was especially talkative. "You seem to have been in a great hurry to sign that unhappy treaty," he said one day. "Yes, Monseigneur," said

Talleyrand. "I was in a great hurry. There are senators who say I was in a great hurry to get the crown offered to your royal house." Another day the pretentious young prince was boasting what they would do with the army that had been restored to France by Talleyrand surrendering the fortresses. Talleyrand, who was sitting quietly near, got up and blandly reminded him that this army had been obtained by the "unhappy treaty" he had signed with the Allies. He actually heard courtiers talk of making war on the Allies with this army. The Tsar was deeply disgusted, and began to regret the return of the Bourbons. Talleyrand made every effort to prevent his alienation from the King. "The King has studied our history: he knows us. Liberal principles are advancing with the spirit of the age." He wrote these things at a time when he saw the whole country being disposed to welcome a return of Napoleon.

The three months that followed the conclusion of the treaty with the Allies were spent in preparation for the coming Congress and uneasy observation of internal development. Some of the smaller sovereigns set up by the Peace of Paris entered on their domains at once, but the definitive settlement of the map of Europe was postponed to a Congress to be held at Vienna in the autumn. At this Congress Talleyrand would have to meet a formidable effort on the part of the diplomatists he had just discomfited, and skilfully to evade the inflated directions that the courtiers were pressing upon the

King. His first care was to part on good terms with the ministers who were to reunite at Vienna. His personal qualities and the general recognition of the fact that he had endeavoured throughout to moderate the bloody march of Napoleon favoured his effort, but there was a feeling that he had secured too much for France, and a plot was forming to exclude him by some stratagem from the important discussions at Vienna. It was, moreover, visible to all that the Tsar was entirely surrendering his protection of France. The Prussian ministers departed with bitter determination to press their claims at Vienna. The Tsar went off to England with a mortified feeling of having been betrayed into a blunder by Talleyrand. With the English ministers Talleyrand retained good relations, though he had (as usual) little respect for their diplomatic gifts. "What a prodigious amount these English do not know!" he said afterwards, *à propos* of Castlereagh, who was at Paris with his brother and Lord Cathcart. Lord Wellington came to Paris as ambassador in August, and became a great admirer and friend of the French Foreign Minister.

At the house of Mme. de Staël, who was once more shining in Paris, the Liberals and Constitutionalists discussed the situation with concern. The whole policy initiated by Napoleon of the open career was being discarded. Degrees of "attachment" to the exiled royal family were made the sole grounds of qualification for office amongst the crowd of incompetent claimants.

“Regicides” were marked out as excluded from all honour and position. When Talleyrand protested that this was no reason for rejecting the abler and more useful of the Republicans, the King pleaded that his courtiers would not tolerate them. The King’s chief confidant, Blacas, replied to all suggestions of the dangers they were incurring with a lofty declaration that there could be no compromise between truth and error, between the monarchy and the revolution. Talleyrand by this time knew how to wait, and fell back on that attitude. His only action in the Senate, to which he belonged, was to defend the proposals of the new Minister of Finance, his friend, Baron Louis.

On the other hand he made careful preparation for the campaign at Vienna. The first thing to do was to discover the aims and intentions of the four great Powers, and that did not take him long. The treaties that had knit together the coalition against Napoleon were based on a partition of the territory to be wrested from him. Napoleon’s ruthless clipping and maiming of Austria and Prussia had to be amended, and those Powers demanded a heavy discount. Prussia hoped to get Saxony, Lower Pomerania, part of Poland, and the Rhine districts from Mayence to Holland. The Tsar, whose plans were sufficiently revealed to Talleyrand during the few weeks’ stay at the Hotel St. Florentin, desired the whole of Poland (with a separate constitution, but under the Russian Crown). Thus the claims of the two most covetous Powers were inconsistent with

each other and unacceptable to Austria, who was especially unwilling to compensate the King of Saxony in Italy. England had already secured Hanover and the independence of the Netherlands, and was not further interested in Europe, except in the balancing of the Powers against each other ; but she was bound by the treaties signed.

Talleyrand fully informed himself of the views of the Powers, and formed the plan he afterwards followed with brilliant success. He would pose as the dignified and disinterested representative of principle in this game of grab. Partly under directions from the King, partly from reasons of personal regard or interest, he determined to frustrate Prussia's design on Saxony and to secure the restoration of Naples to Sicily. Here the opportunist and democratic Talleyrand would plead the principle of legitimacy. As England was the least interested of the Powers he would win her first to his new fervour for principles, and Austria, with her interests mainly southern and a natural concern at any undue growth of Prussia and Russia, might be drawn with them against the northern Powers. But the first difficulty was to get a hearing. By one of the earlier treaties (Chaumont) the four Powers had agreed to exclude France from the deliberations respecting the division of the territory won from her. Prussia was bent on having this condition carried out, and Russia and Austria had no reason as yet to depart from it. Talleyrand prepared the way for his attack on this formidable obstacle to his plans by a close

and assiduous cultivation of England. He impressed effusively on the English Ambassador, first Sir Charles Stuart and then Lord Wellington, the identity of the interests, or the disinterestedness, of France and England, and brought about a feeling of cordiality. Castlereagh himself stopped at Paris for a few days on the way to Vienna, and was much interviewed.

The next step was to prepare the personnel of the French party and the indirect machinery of diplomacy. He chose Dalberg, partly as a small reward to his friend and partly "to let out secrets" at Vienna, and La Besnardière to do the substantial work of the legation. Of the two royalists who accompanied him, the Count de Noailles (a moderate) and M. de Latour du Pin, he says that as he knew he would have to take some of the Court party to watch him, he preferred to have them of his own choosing. The latter would be able "to sign passports." He also took his nephew's charming and tactful wife, the Countess Edmond de Périgord, to entertain for him. She proved "very useful" in breaking down the social boycott with which hostile ministers tried to support their resolve to exclude Talleyrand from the settlement. They rented the Hotel Kaunitz at Vienna, and some of the most brilliant fêtes and most attractive dinners of the ensuing winter were given there.

The last point was to obtain suitable instructions from the King, or, rather, give sober instructions to Louis XVIII. He therefore drew up a long memorandum and programme, and got it signed by the King

without difficulty. The French representatives at the Congress were to see that things were done in order and on principle. The Congress would have to settle what States should be represented in it, what its objects were, and how they were to be attained. In this regard the Treaty of May 30th must be followed, which promises a *general* Congress. The idea of a "Power" must be taken in a wide sense, and all the States, large or small, that took part in the war must be admitted. The small German States should be formed into a confederation, and the Congress cannot accomplish this without their assistance. In the distribution of territory it must be remembered that modern Europe does not recognize that sovereignty may be obtained by mere conquest, and without the abdication of the conquered sovereign. "Sovereignty is, in the general society of Europe, what private ownership is in a particular civil society." On this principle Saxony and the other German States must be dealt with. The Congress has to dispose of the territory renounced by France, and the principles of public right must guide the distribution. Balance of power does not mean equality of force. Small States must be preserved, and, *a fortiori*, Saxony, whose king has been a father to his people, a beneficent ruler. France must protect the little States against the larger ; must see that Prussia does not get Mayence or any territory left of the Moselle, and so on. Poland is to be reconstructed, on condition that its restoration is entire and complete. England being equally conservative

with France as to the state of Europe must be cultivated as an ally. In the end the memorandum lays down four chief points on which the representatives of France must insist, whatever concession they make apart from them. These are : 1. That Austria shall not obtain the States of the King of Sardinia for one of its princes ; 2. That Naples shall be restored to Ferdinand IV. ; 3. That the *whole* of Poland shall not pass under the sovereignty of Russia ; 4. That Prussia shall not get Saxony—"at least, not the whole of it"—nor Mayence.

Had these four points been submitted to any other ambassador at the Congress beforehand he would have smiled. We have now to see how Talleyrand secured every one of them in the face of tremendous opposition.*

* The determination to have Murat deposed and Naples restored to Ferdinand is one of the cardinal points. This was insisted on by Louis XVIII as a family accommodation. It was not less advisable for France generally.* Murat was too near Elba, as the sequel showed. Yet an able French critic of Talleyrand, M. Ollivier (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, September 15th 1894), has so far strained, perverted and ignored the evidence as to say Talleyrand first corresponded with Murat, and got 1,250,000 francs from him, and *then* turned against him and obtained several millions from Ferdinand. The blind hostility of Sainte Beuve is not yet extinct at Paris. Ollivier's whole case is founded on Sainte Beuve's "remarkable study" (a happy phrase!), Pasquier's "judicious" memoirs and the wild charges of Savary, Chateaubriand and Napoleon.

CHAPTER XV

A DIPLOMATIC ROMANCE

TALLEYRAND and his party arrived at Vienna on September 23rd. He immediately saw the representatives of the other great Powers, found that his anticipation of their resolve to restrict his action was correct, and opened his campaign. It was not a difficult task to induce the ministers of the secondary Powers to make common cause with the ablest diplomatist at the Congress. The Spanish Minister, Labrador, was urged to press the disputable claim of his country to be considered a first-class Power, and support Talleyrand in his manœuvres. The smaller States were fully disposed to have their feeble voices swelled into a respectable protest by fitting them into Talleyrand's scheme. The representatives of Prussia (Prince Hardenberg and Baron Humboldt), of Russia (Nesselrode, Stakelberg and Rassoumoffsky), of Austria (Metternich), and of England (Castlereagh and Stewart), were in constant correspondence. Talleyrand waited and watched. At last he inquired of Metternich why there was no indication of the opening of the Congress, which had been fixed for October 1st. After some discussion between the four Powers, Metternich and

Nesselrode obtained that Talleyrand and the Spanish Minister should be invited to assist at a preliminary conference on September 30th, and the diplomatic struggle begins.

Talleyrand at once sees Labrador and arranges the reply to Metternich's note. He himself replies that he will be pleased to meet the other Powers, in which he carefully includes Spain ; Labrador, in accepting, puts France at the head of the Powers he is prepared to discuss with. When Talleyrand reached the Foreign Chancellery he finds all the chief ministers seated at a long table, and he drops into a vacant chair between Castlereagh, who presided, and Metternich. He immediately throws in the apple of discord by asking why he alone of the French legation is invited. When he is told that only the chiefs of the various legations are summoned, he asks why Baron von Humboldt represents Prussia as well as Prince Hardenberg. They point out delicately that Hardenberg is rather deaf, and he smilingly refers to his own lameness. "We all have our infirmities, and have the same right to profit by them." But this is only a trivial point raised in order to induce nervousness ; as is also his support of the Portuguese Minister's claim (inspired by himself) to be admitted. Castlereagh opens the proceedings, and says they have first to inform Talleyrand and Labrador what has been done. The protocol (minutes) of the previous conferences is handed to Talleyrand. He raised his eyebrows in artistic astonishment when he finds

that it contains the word "Allies" in every paragraph. Who are these "Allies?" Are we "still at Chaumont?" He had supposed that the war was over. They hastily—much too hastily—assure him that it is a mere form or phrase, and he continues to read about treaties and agreements that had been concealed or were supposed to be concealed from him. "I don't understand it," he says, returning the papers. "I don't know of anything being done on these dates." The only date he knows anything of is October 1st, when the Congress is to begin. The other ministers, thrown off their guard by his unforeseen tactics, abandon their protocol as unimportant, and it is not seen again. They then produce a document regulating the procedure of the Congress, and invite him and Labrador to sign it. He reads it, hesitates, and says it needs leisurely consideration. It may be that only the Congress itself can give the representatives of the four Powers the faculties they have assumed. Castlereagh and himself, he points out, are responsible to their nations, and must proceed cautiously. Castlereagh rather assents, and the Prussians fume. Something is said of "the King of Naples." "Who is he?" asks Talleyrand. Humboldt ventures to say that the Powers have guaranteed Murat his territory. "But they could not, and, therefore, they did not," insists Talleyrand.

The conference broke up amid a general air of embarrassment. I have taken the account of it from Talleyrand's memoirs and his report to the King.

But the Secretary of the Congress, Gentz, who soon formed a profound admiration of Talleyrand, describes it as a scene he could never forget, and says that all the intrigues of the ministers were defeated. Like Napoleon, Talleyrand believed in setting ajar the nerves of his diplomatic opponents, but he had also made a substantial attack on the plot to exclude France. The minutes of the previous meetings were destroyed, and no more meetings were held to which the French Minister was not invited.

The next morning he followed up his advantage by submitting a note on the procedure of the Congress. He claimed, plausibly enough, that the representatives of the eight Powers who had signed the Treaty of Paris (where the Congress was decided on) should appoint a commission to prepare its programme. This would let in Portugal and Sweden, as well as France and Spain. Baron Humboldt described it as "a torch flung amongst us." Metternich and Castlereagh beg him to withdraw his note. Talleyrand explains that this is impossible as it has somehow leaked out, and the Spanish Minister has unfortunately (but at Talleyrand's secret suggestion) sent a copy of it to his Court. Metternich threatens that the four Powers will act by themselves. Talleyrand amiably replies that in that event he will not feel called upon to attend the Congress. Nesselrode bluntly protests that the Tsar must leave Austria by the 29th, and Talleyrand suavely assures him he "is very sorry, as in that case the Tsar is not likely to see the end of the



From an engraving, after the picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

PRINCE METTERNICH.

[p. 306.]

Congress." Castlereagh endeavours to talk over Talleyrand with British common sense. The objects of France can be secured, he is explaining, when Talleyrand interrupts him with an expression of lofty amazement, and says France is there to represent principles, not to secure objects. They have to answer to Europe, which has suffered so much from the neglect of good maxims of conduct. Von Gagern, representing Bavaria,⁵ said: "Is it not extraordinary that, when the French speak of principles for the first time since the world began no one will listen to them?" Gentz admitted to Talleyrand at dinner that night that the other Powers knew he was right, but did not like to retreat. He wished Talleyrand had arrived earlier.

The Tsar had already granted him the interview he had asked on arriving at Vienna. In answer to Alexander's inquiry as to the state of France he gave a very cheerful (and totally untrue) account. He had just received pitiable reports from Fouché and D'Hauterive. When the Tsar spoke of needs or interests deciding what was to be done in Europe, Talleyrand reminded him that right came before interest. "The interests of Europe constitute right," said the Tsar. Talleyrand raised his head and dropped his arms, ejaculating: "Poor Europe!" When he remonstrated with Alexander for using the word "Allies," the Emperor explained it away as being due to force of habit. A few days afterwards he saw Metternich, and humorously alluded to "the Allies."

"There are none now," said Metternich. When Metternich tried to smile at his affectation of disinterestedness, Talleyrand offered to sign a note to the effect that France wanted nothing and would not accept anything from the Congress. Metternich mentioned Naples, and Talleyrand at once said it was a question of principle.

The Congress was now a week overdue, and the irritated ministers saw all their preparations for it thwarted. The Prussian party had been strengthened by their minister from London, one of the "eagles of their diplomacy," but they could make no headway. On October 8th there was another conference. Talleyrand delivered to Castlereagh another note on the Congress, and wanted it stated that it would be held "in conformity with the principles of public right." Hardenberg jumped up, and, with his fists clenched on the table, snapped out that "that went without saying." "It will be all the easier to insert it," replied Talleyrand. Baron Humboldt then took up the quarrel, and wanted to know "what they had to do with public right." "It is in virtue of public right that you are here," retorted Talleyrand quietly. The phrase did eventually appear in the Declaration. In the middle of the Conference Castlereagh drew Talleyrand aside, and asked him if he would be "easier" if they gave him his point. "What will you do about Naples if I promise?" immediately asked the moralist. Castlereagh promised his assistance.

Thus the opening stages of the diplomatic campaign

went entirely in Talleyrand's favour. He had advised the King to publish his instructions in the Parisian press, and all Vienna now read the edifying principles on which the French legation proceeded. Russia and Prussia were being gradually forced into a minority, and their covetous designs on Poland and Saxony were being cleverly represented as the real obstacles to progress. Their mortification was profound. Neither social coldness nor the refusal of information disturbed Talleyrand's equanimity. The one design was defeated by the attractiveness of his establishment, the other was a stratagem he had too often encountered. Gagern and Castlereagh alone used to visit the Hotel Kaunitz in the first week or two, but the amiable countess soon saw her dinners well attended. Early in December the Austrian papers described her as the first lady in the quadrille at a ball of the utmost brilliance and importance. And Talleyrand's tongue counted for something in the cosmopolitan society at Vienna. "His biting sarcasm ranged all the thinkers and all the laughers on his side," said Metternich. His quips on the quaint manners of the Tsar, the heavy sullenness of the Prussians, the political innocence of the English, and the "niaiseries" of Metternich, circulated at every ball and dinner.

The opening of November saw little advance in the negotiations. Talleyrand fought resolutely for the preservation of Saxony, against the cession of Poland to Russia, and for the restoration of Naples to the Bourbons. He admitted that Prussia should be indemnified,

but "the sacred principle of legitimacy" forbade the sacrifice of Saxony to them. When the Prussians retorted that they would be satisfied in conscience if the Powers assigned it to them, he replied that the Powers could not give what did not belong to them. When Russia tried to seize his weapon of "legitimacy" for the defence of their design to re-establish Poland (under the Russian crown), he blandly assented, *if* they would re-erect the whole of Poland and make it completely independent. And whenever a minister approached him with a quiet suggestion of "making a bargain," he drew himself up with haughty moral dignity. He was determined to get both Saxony and Naples. Throughout October he was writing that the English ruled the Congress, and they had "no principles." They were ready to give Saxony to Prussia—Castlereagh complaining bitterly of the "treachery" of its king—and generally to strengthen Prussia and Austria against France; but they joined Talleyrand and Austria in regard to Poland, and were ready to be accommodating as regarded Naples.

On November 5th Metternich invited Talleyrand to meet himself and Castlereagh. They wanted his confidence and assistance to make some progress. The French Minister threw up his arms. How could he help them when he knew nothing that they did not know, whereas they were perpetually withholding their deliberations from him? Let them open the Congress. He was told that the Prussians—Castlereagh told him

privately how they dreaded him—would not hear of it until the Powers were agreed. On the same day the King of Prussia had a private interview with the Tsar, and they decided to support each other. Prussia was to have Saxony, and Russia to set up a kingdom of Poland. Talleyrand met the agreement by impressing its unacceptable features on Austria and England, and drawing closer to them. By the insertion of articles in the Parisian papers and the publication of pamphlets he was bringing public opinion to his view as regarded Saxony. The Austrian generals were openly in favour of it, and there was a strong feeling for it in England. By the beginning of December Metternich sent Talleyrand a copy of a letter in which he protested to Prussia against the annexation of Saxony, and “rejoiced to find himself in line with the French Cabinet on an object so worthy of defence.” The Tsar was losing ground daily. In spite of his excessive amiability—he danced or took tea with every lady in Vienna—his ambition was alarming people. The Prussian ambassadors were seen nowhere. They were shedding fruitless perspiration in their cabinets. By the end of November Talleyrand reported to Louis that France was now not only not excluded from the settlement of questions that interested her, but was sharing in the redistribution of Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. Austria and England now needed her. The perspicacious Louis solemnly accepted Talleyrand’s assurance that it was his (the King’s) lofty enunciation of principles which had changed the atmosphere of

Vienna. His brief letters are full of unconscious humour.

By the middle of December Talleyrand heard that Austria, Russia, and Prussia had come to an agreement about Poland. The Tsar relinquished his larger pretensions, granted parts of Poland to Prussia and Austria, and was then allowed to give the remainder a constitution. Prussia appealed to Austria to help her to get her much laboured compensation, and Metternich offered her part of Poland and only a fifth part of Saxony. This note was delivered to Talleyrand, and at once inspired him with a fresh flow of that "noble phraseology" which he had promised Mme. de Staël to employ at Vienna. He ceased to speak of Poland, and concentrated on Saxony. The King of Saxony must be invited to say what part of his territory he would surrender (it was now clear the whole could not be preserved). Civilised nations know no such process as confiscation. Castlereagh was now directed to come to an understanding with Talleyrand. The French Minister responded with a proposal that England, France, and Austria should sign a convention to protect Saxony, and in the early days of January a secret treaty between the three was signed. Military preparations were quietly made, and it transpired in Vienna that they had urged the Turks to make a diversion against Russia in case of war. A number of the secondary Powers joined them.

For a time the situation seemed dangerous, and the exasperation of Prussia was great. But the defensive

character of the new alliance was discreetly emphasised, fresh concessions of territory were made to Prussia, and the Tsar urged a peaceful and speedy settlement. Talleyrand wrote in glowing language to France, and he was assured from the capital that his prestige had risen considerably. He made a last adroit use of his indirect diplomatic machinery before the close of the Congress. The anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI occurred on January 21st, and arrangements were made for an impressive ceremony in the cathedral at Vienna, at which few of the rulers and statesmen could decline the invitation to assist. Every detail of it was directed to further Talleyrand's aims. The sermon delivered had been prepared by the Count de Noailles—Louis said that nothing so fine had been heard at Paris—and Talleyrand induced Gentz to write a special account of the ceremony in the Vienna *Beobachter*. A huge crowd of princes and politicians dined that night at the Hotel Kaunitz. Vienna was subtly impregnated with sympathy.

The last stages of the Congress passed more swiftly and smoothly. Prussia had to withdraw her protest against the admission of Talleyrand to the commission on territorial redistribution, so that the great aim of his policy as regarded procedure was fully attained. That he should secure the literal acceptance of his programme in the redistribution itself was not to be expected, but the final arrangement was widely different from what the other Powers had intended. The kingdom of Saxony

was preserved, though greatly reduced. On the other hand Prussia obtained the Rhine districts, which Talleyrand had tried to prevent her from getting on the ground that she was "a quarrelsome neighbour." The other Powers were not unwilling to see her mount guard against France on the Rhine. The smaller German kingdoms were left in existence. Some of them had bespoken Talleyrand's interest. Austria obtained Venice in spite of him, but he eventually got his way as regarded Naples. Wellington (who replaced Castlereagh in February) supported the French demand for the expulsion of Murat, Russia was driven to the same conclusion in the design of weakening Austria, and Murat finally played into their hands by declaring for Napoleon. Thus the two chief details of his programme, the maintenance of a kingdom of Saxony and the restoration of Naples to the Bourbons, were secured. His dignified refusal to compromise had the full empirical justification which he had expected. In other matters he was less rigid in his cult of "principle." He raised no protest to Bernadotte retaining Sweden, and maintained the act of mediation in Switzerland.

The Congress of Vienna is the greatest of Talleyrand's diplomatic achievements, and I have endeavoured to give an outline of his methods of action there. The results are familiar in general history. Apart from the distinguished talent that he exhibited, and that is easily appreciated, it only remains to say a word about his motives. It is needless to point out that his inexorable

insistence on principle was a carefully calculated expedient. It would be misleading to recall here his saying that "the best principle is to have none at all." He had principles; but they were ultimate principles. Peace, justice, France and humanity were ideals at which he never scoffed. There his idealism ended. It was one of the chief grounds of the exasperation of his opponents that they knew how little he really cared about principles of "legitimacy" and the like. His action was inspired and controlled by a variety of motives—the interest of France, the cause of European peace, the family interests of Louis XVIII, some sense of chivalry for the smaller States, the picturesqueness and humour of posing as the champion of virtue amongst the partitioning Powers, and the expectation of gratitude from such men as the King of Saxony. He is said to have received two, and even three, million francs from Saxony. As usual, the statement is quite unauthoritative, and the rumours are conflicting. The Congress of Vienna probably brought him a very large sum. I have pointed out before that there was no pretence of stealth about his receiving money, though the sums mentioned by various writers seem generally to be guesses. Not a single instance is alleged in which he was "bought." Presents of money changed hands very freely at Vienna. As it had been Talleyrand's deliberate policy to stand between the larger Powers and the smaller—to prevent, as far as possible, the growth of the former by the absorption of the latter—

he would be in the end an exceptional recipient of gratitude.* He would have smiled at the notion that this gratitude should only have been embodied in diamonds or china, especially if it is true that at that very moment his splendid library was being dispatched to Sotheby's.

Before the Tsar left Vienna Talleyrand was compelled to impair still more their earlier friendship. Alexander had shown much coolness in regard to him in September and October. To disappointment in the development in France was added the consciousness that Talleyrand was strenuously opposing his Polish plans. As time wore on, and Talleyrand's campaign succeeded, there was a change. By the end of November Alexander was looking out everywhere for Talleyrand, who avoided him. The settlement of the Polish question left them tolerably friendly. Then came an incident which Talleyrand must have faced with great reluctance. He had earlier favoured the idea of a marriage between the Archduchess Anna and the Duc de Berry. He now felt that a Franco-Russian alliance was undesirable, and wrote to dissuade Louis XVIII from entertaining the project. The Tsar approached him directly on the matter at Vienna, and he had to suggest difficulties and have recourse to the very

* It is also clear that presents more frequently took the form of cash than they do now. Ambassadors of historic and wealthy families could afford the luxury of disdaining money. Talleyrand had not a franc of hereditary wealth; and his diplomatic pre-eminence entailed enormous expenditure. To-day no man of character or culture could be offered money. Talleyrand lived in an age of transition, and was a cynic.

transparent device of postponing the subject. The Tsar had not forgotten how Talleyrand and he had secretly agreed at Erfurt to deceive Napoleon in regard to the same archduchess. It considerably widened the breach between them.

Had Talleyrand foreseen the events of the coming March he might have used more diplomacy. In the evening of March 6th the various ministers were urgently summoned by Metternich. Talleyrand was the first to arrive and to hear that Napoleon had sailed from Elba. There was excitement enough, but it is a great exaggeration to speak of dismay. The news had the good effect of quickening the pace at Vienna, and there was not a moment's hesitation on the part of the Powers as to the steps to be taken. Napoleon was a common enemy, a common outlaw. Talleyrand did not believe at first that he would land in France, but he could hardly have been unprepared for the account of his victorious advance on Paris. For weeks he had been receiving letters on the mutinous condition of the army, the criminal expenditure on gold-laced household troops, the incessant attacks on the holders of nationalised property, and the other abuses and follies of the returned party. Within a fortnight Napoleon was at Paris, and the pompous and misguided Louis was flying towards Belgium. The Powers became "allies" once more, and set their forces in motion to arrest "the bandit."

Lytton, who has done so much to clear the character of Talleyrand from calumny, is here betrayed into an

unfortunate error. He says that Talleyrand recollected that the first duty of a diplomatist after a congress is to see to his liver, and departed for Carlsbad. Sainte Beuve and others have eagerly reproduced this picture of the wily politician retiring into inactivity on Napoleon's reappearance, and waiting to see which side would win in the struggle. The picture is totally false. The Congress was not completed—its act was not signed—until June 9th. Talleyrand left Vienna the very next day for Belgium, and was in Brussels on June 21st. Further, we have the correspondence he wrote to Louis from Vienna, and from this it is clear, not only that he remained at Vienna, but that he rendered most important and loyal service to Louis throughout the Hundred Days. There is never more than an interval of a few days between his letters, and they are all dated from Vienna. It is true that Von Gagern speaks of him as asking an asylum in Wiesbaden, but there is no room whatever to admit an absence from duty at any time of more than a day or two. Finally, we know that he formally rejected the advances made by Napoleon.

In the first few days he clearly felt no serious concern about the movements of Napoleon. The event might be turned to good account, he observed. He went at once with Metternich and Wellington to see the King of Saxony at Pressburg on behalf of the Congress. It was left to Talleyrand chiefly to persuade the king that he must submit, and the mission was quickly discharged. He found an old friend of his, the

Countess de Brionne, dying at Pressburg, and interrupts his account of the Congress to describe his touching farewell. He could weep like a woman on such occasions. He was back in Vienna on March 13th, and signed on behalf of France the manifesto of the Powers against Napoleon. It is impossible that he should have had any serious doubt about the final issue of Napoleon's raid. He heard Alexander offer the whole resources of his country, and saw the absolute unanimity and resolution of Europe. The Treaty of Chaumont was revived, and every State in Europe was invited to join the grand coalition. Talleyrand secured that the French king should now be included in the allied forces against Napoleon.

Unfortunately, four days afterwards came the news that the King had crossed the frontier with a slender regiment of followers. Talleyrand had urged that he should remain in one of the fortresses in the north of France. He had written to the King on April 23rd to tell him of the firm attitude of the Powers against Napoleon, but had added, "with infinite regret," that they were less definite in their attitude towards Louis. This was really not the case at that time, but it seemed a good opportunity to bring the King to reason. He followed up his point with a strong plea for reform and Liberalism, and said he would join the King as soon as the interests of France permitted him to leave Vienna. A few days later he wrote that there had been an intrigue to prevent the signature of the Act of the

Congress, and he must remain to defeat it. Then came the very unwelcome news that Louis had fled from the country. Talleyrand wrote to express his regret, and hoped that the Court had brought away from Paris all his letters from Vienna. Amongst them was a copy of the secret treaty with Austria and England against Russia and Prussia. Napoleon would not fail to make use of this. Louis's courtiers had brought away the crown jewels and left the documents behind.

The Act of the Congress was not signed until June 9th, and Talleyrand resisted all entreaties to come to Belgium until this was done. Chateaubriand wrote him that it was "absolutely necessary" for him to come. Talleyrand's decision to remain at or near Vienna until the fruits of his diplomacy were fully secured is not open to criticism or misinterpretation. There was a real danger in the postponement and re-opening of the Congress. It is quite true that he was approached by an emissary of Napoleon during April. Montrond, an old friend of Talleyrand's, came to Vienna to ascertain the attitude of the Powers and make overtures to Talleyrand. Napoleon, who had at first proscribed him, was now anxious to secure him. Michaud declares, with the customary absolute lack of authority, that Talleyrand offered to negotiate for him the return of the Empress and her son. Napoleon himself admits that one of the objects of Montrond was to "win Talleyrand," and claims that "all his objects were achieved." The claim is frivolous. We have not a

very distinct picture of Talleyrand's occupation during April and May, but there is no ground whatever for doubting the truth of his statement that he refused to treat with Montrond. At the most we may merely smile at his explanation that it would have "prostituted his politics." He saw that Europe was determined to remove Napoleon. No doubt he had a momentary anxiety when he learned that Napoleon had given the Russians a copy of his secret treaty of January 3rd, but he laughed it off to Nesselrode, and soon learned that Alexander was unmoved by it. Once that danger was over, the alliance against Napoleon was irresistible.

On the other hand there was an increasing disinclination among the Allies to pledge themselves to support Louis, and other alternatives were freely discussed. We may very well admit that Talleyrand kept an open mind on these, and would much rather be in Austria than Belgium. But he acted loyally on behalf of the King. It was he who induced the reluctant Allies to send representatives to the Court at Ghent. The most serious alternative to Louis was the Duke of Orléans, who was at London, and in regard to whom Talleyrand seems to have been entirely passive. It is not unlikely that, apart from his real concern to see the Act of the Congress signed, he wanted to see the ultra faction entirely discredited at Ghent, and a more definite leaning to his own liberal policy before proceeding there. He knew how things were going on at Ghent. The distracted King was wavering between the courtiers,

who threw the whole blame of the revolution on the Radicals, and the Liberal statesmen who returned it to the shoulders of the returned emigrants. The Allies were throwing their weight in the latter side of the scale, and were discussing the advisability of superseding Louis. The Tsar openly favoured the Duke of Orléans. Louis was forced to press for the return of Talleyrand, and the signing of the act of the Congress on June 9th left him no reason for delay in Vienna. He departed on the following day, and arrived at Brussels on the 21st.

Waterloo had been fought and won. Napoleon was now a dead force, but Louis continued to be a very equivocal one. Acting on the unfortunate advice of Wellington, the King was re-entering France in the train of the allied armies. Talleyrand had urged the more politic course of entering France independently, and setting up the government quite apart from their influence. He concluded that the King was again swayed by his incompetent followers, and declined to see him. He had proceeded to Mons, where the King had halted, but angrily rejected the advice of the more moderate ministers to have an interview. In the night, however, he was awakened with the intelligence that Louis was on the point of leaving Mons, and he hurried across. Witnesses who scanned Talleyrand's countenance after the interview read contradictory expressions into it. Chateaubriand says he was "mad with rage"; Beugnot, a less sentimental observer, says that he was in one of his best moods. Talleyrand probably played the Sphinx,

but we know from him that he "made no impression" on the King, although he spoke very plainly to him of the divine right of kings and the human rights of peoples.

He had, apparently, some presentiment of the evil disposition of the King, and had prepared a memorandum to be read at leisure. In this "Report" he gave his official account of his work at Vienna, and added a very straight talk on the situation in France. While the principle of legitimacy was triumphing in Vienna, he said, it was being enfeebled in France itself. He summarises the complaints of constitutionalist people, putting them in the mouth of observers at Vienna. "The source of a power must not be confused with its exercise." "When religious sentiments were profoundly graven on the hearts and were all-powerful in the minds of the people, men might believe that the power of the sovereign was an emanation of the Divinity. To-day it is the general opinion—and it is useless to seek to enfeeble it—that governments exist solely for the people." Neglect of these principles had prepared the way for Napoleon. His memoir made no more impression than his conversation.

The King would not be persuaded to follow Talleyrand's plan of entry into France, and proceeded to Cambrai. Talleyrand ended by asking permission to take the waters at Carlsbad, and the King politely trusted they would do him good. It is useless to seek to discover any plan in Talleyrand's thoughts on the

day after the King left him at Mons. There was probably none. The situation was too changeful and precarious for such designs. He assisted at the dinner given by the Mayor of Mons, and covered his chagrin with more than customary charm and brilliance of conversation. Metternich wrote to confirm him in his attitude ; but Wellington was determined to have in France "one man they could trust," and immediately begged him to rejoin the King. He replied in a long letter to Wellington, accepting his advice and enlarging on the folly of the King in putting himself in the hands of the extreme Royalists. There was still, he said, no guarantee whatever of constitutional procedure, and the whole work of the Allies might again be frustrated. But he joined Louis "amongst the baggage of the English army" at Cambrai, and resumed the struggle with evil influences. Wellington now occupied the predominant position that Alexander had held in the Restoration of 1814. Talleyrand speaks of him at the time with no great respect, but they later formed an intimate friendship.

When Talleyrand arrived at Cambrai a Council was called by the King. A most tactless proclamation had been issued by the Court party, and Talleyrand now submitted a second one to the Council. It contained such phrases as : "My Government may have made mistakes ; possibly it has." The King's brother objected that such an admission "lowered royalty" and could not be made. When the document went on to describe

the King as "carried away by his affections," Monsieur warmly requested to know if that was a reference to himself. "Yes, it is," said Talleyrand, "since Monsieur has placed the discussion on that ground. Monsieur has done a great deal of harm." The Duc de Berry now heatedly interposed that only the presence of the King prevented him from resenting the use of such language to his father. Louis stopped the quarrel, and said that the proclamation would be altered. The substance of it was adopted, however, and it was issued, signed by the King and by Talleyrand.

They entered Paris on July 8th, and another phase of Talleyrand's difficulties began. Whether the Allies would have been more moderate, or less secure in their ground, if Louis had followed his advice and entered France independently of them, is not quite so clear as he would have us think. In any case the situation was very different from what it had been in 1814. Prussia was more determined than ever to humble France. The Tsar was less disposed than ever to curb Blücher, and to protect Louis. Wellington was the only one who was thoroughly in favour of the Restoration; and he was too little acquainted with French affairs and too eager to take independent action to co-operate with Talleyrand's plans. After two months of exasperating struggle Talleyrand was driven into retirement.

CHAPTER XVI

THE "FOREIGNERS OF THE INTERIOR"

ON July 9th, the day after the re-entering of Paris, Talleyrand was appointed Foreign Minister and President of the Council. His difficulties began with the new Ministry. He had in June drawn up a list of ministers, and had carefully excluded Fouché and included two men with a view to conciliating the Tsar. But Fouché was intriguing most assiduously for a place in the Ministry. The contrast between the two men is instructive. Both have the remarkable history of taking service under the successive governments of the country ; both were experts of the highest ability in their respective departments. Yet while later writers have expended a vast amount of moral indignation over the "knight of the order of the weathercock" (as they called Talleyrand) there has been comparatively little concern about Fouché. While Talleyrand has been at times buried beneath a mass of such epithets as corruption, treachery, venality, and unscrupulousness, Fouché has been passed by with a smile at his knavery. Nevertheless, while Talleyrand takes his place with some dignity in the eyes of contemporary statesmen in the successive administrations, Fouché has to resort to the most unblushing jobbery, and is only admitted under the

heavy pressure of practical exigencies. Nothing could better illustrate the effort and prejudice that have been thrown into the hostile interpretation of Talleyrand's career.

Fouché had been at work since April, when, while serving under Napoleon, he had offered the King to get rid of him on condition of receiving the Ministry of Police. After Waterloo he flew from place to place, and statesman to statesman, offering to surrender Napoleon, obtain the capitulation of Paris—anything in order to get his coveted place in the Ministry. He persuaded Monsieur that he was necessary for crushing the remainder of the rebellion, and at last imposed that view on Wellington. Talleyrand resisted the tendency to purchase his useful qualities, but was overruled and had to admit him as a colleague. He is often blamed for not resigning at once. No doubt he tested that suggestion by his usual question: "What good would it do?" It is difficult to see any real ground for censuring him. He strongly blames Wellington for admitting Fouché, and suggests that he was too eager "to be the first to enter Paris." Chateaubriand was in attendance on the King at St. Denis, and saw Talleyrand come from his chamber leaning on Fouché—"vice leaning on the arm of crime," he bitterly says. It was Chateaubriand above all who had implored Talleyrand to come from Vienna to the assistance of the King.

Talleyrand was further disappointed in forming the new Ministry by being unable to include the two

friends of the Tsar. Pozzo di Borgo preferred to remain in the service of Russia. The Duc de Richelieu replied that he had been twenty years out of France, and was quite incompetent to take a responsible position in the conduct of the affairs of the country. Talleyrand seems to have known that the Tsar was pressing for Richelieu to replace himself, and he sent a rather sarcastic reply. When Richelieu did actually replace him at the head of the Ministry two months afterwards, he took the mild revenge of inserting a copy of his letter (pleading incompetence for a minor position) in his memoirs, and issuing a *mot* on the subject. Someone asked him if he really thought Richelieu capable of taking the head of French affairs. "Of course ;" he said, "no one in France knows so much about the Crimea as he does."

The next step was to nominate the prefects of departments. The most competent men were Napoleonists, and could not be reinstated. On the other hand the Court party were pressing upon the King a host of totally incompetent men on the plea that they were faithful Royalists. To have been in Ghent became the first qualification for office. When one man urged his claim on Talleyrand in this way he asked : "Are you sure you *went* to Ghent, and have not merely returned from there." The man was naturally puzzled. "Because, you see," Talleyrand continued, "there were only seven or eight hundred of us there, and to my knowledge seventy or eighty thousand have *come* from there." But

he had to witness the appointment of hundreds of these incapable Royalists, while the state of the provinces demanded firm and competent administrators. Between the excesses of the allied troops and the conflicts of Royalists and Bonapartists there were sanguinary disturbances. One advantage was gained indirectly. Fouché had to draw up a report on the troubles for the King, and he published this before submitting it to his colleagues. He pretended it had been stolen from him, but Talleyrand demanded his expulsion from the Ministry, and the King assented (September 19th). The mythologists give this as the last dialogue of the two ministers. "So you are dismissing me, you scoundrel." "Yes, you imbecile."

Meantime there were a score of other distractions. The conduct of the allied troops was so exasperating and oppressive that the King directed him to make a formal protest. The Allies demanded guarantees of peace, and a long and irritating correspondence ensued. On the other hand the ultras were making every effort to restore the vicious features of the old regime, in absolute blindness to the history of the Hundred Days ; or, indeed, on the plea that greater "firmness" in 1814 would have prevented Napoleon's raid. Talleyrand was sorely tried. "With infinite trouble," he says, he succeeded in maintaining a certain degree of liberty for the Press. He had then to combat the demand for the punishment of those who had sided with Napoleon. He pleaded that it was enough to depose the senators who

had offended, but a list of a hundred names for proscription had been prepared by the obsequious Fouché. After a struggle of several days Talleyrand got the list reduced to fifty-seven names. He also warned a large number of those who were to be brought to trial, and gave passports and money freely so that they might leave the country. He dispensed 459,000 francs in this way. Moreover, when the King went on to create the new peers, he prevailed on him to include a few of the names of those who had joined Napoleon.

Nor were Talleyrand's difficulties with the Allies themselves less considerable. Immediately after the entry into Paris Blücher had promised himself the pleasure of blowing up the Pont Jena, a fine new bridge over the river. His whole conduct was vindictive. He had quartered his troops in the Place de Carrousel, with the guns pointing on the gates of the Tuileries. He had already mined two arches of the bridge when the King heard, and wrote to Talleyrand that if the threat were carried out he would have himself taken to the bridge and blown up with it. Talleyrand at once dispatched Beugnot to "use the strongest language at his command" to Blücher. Beugnot wanted to quote the King's letter, but Talleyrand said the Prussians "would not believe we are so heroic as that." Blücher was quickly discovered at his favourite gaming-room (No. 113, Palais Royal), and was pacified with a promise that the name of the bridge would be changed.

Talleyrand was less successful in his resistance to the Allies when they claimed the statues and pictures and other works of art that had been brought to Paris. On September 11th Castlereagh wrote him that the Pope, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the King of the Netherlands, King of Prussia, and others demanded the return of their treasures, and the Allies had decided to comply. Talleyrand at once protested in the sacred name of morality against such a spoliation of the Parisian museums. At least, he concluded, this should have been done in 1814 or not at all. Wellington now took up the argument, and cut him short "with the brutality of a soldier." The phrase is scarcely too strong. The Duke's letter terminated: "The sovereigns were unable to wrong their subjects in order to satisfy the pride of the French army and nation, who must be made to feel that, in spite of a few temporary and partial advantages in various States, the day of restitution had come, and the allied monarchs could not neglect this opportunity of giving the French a great lesson in morality!" Talleyrand observes in the memoirs that no doubt Wellington had equally espoused the cause of morality when he had been on service in India.

And through all these troubles and distractions there was the grave anxiety about the new terms to be offered to France by the Allies. Pasquier would have us believe that during these busy months Talleyrand was peculiarly indolent, and that his whole energy was absorbed in fretting over a certain lady who seemed

inclined to desert him.* But the whole of Pasquier's narrative at this period is tinged with bitterness against Talleyrand, and must not lightly be followed. He is too obviously trying to justify the change from Talleyrand to his friend Richelieu. However much he may have betrayed his concern at the obstinate absence from Paris of his friend, it is, on the face of it, absurd to say that he could think of nothing else. We have seen that he had plenty to do, and did it. If it is true that there was a notable lack of the intense energy he usually displayed at critical periods (as Casimir P rier says), it is surely possible to trace this to the profound weariness and disgust that the whole situation would inspire. Feebly supported by the King, hated and maligned by the courtiers, surrounded by the intrigues of the Richelieus and Pasquiers and Fouch s, confronted with the hostility of Prussia and Russia and annoyed by the blunders of Wellington, conscious of the wretched state of the country and of the determination of the Allies to undo their generosity of 1814 and avenge Vienna, convinced that he himself would soon be cast aside as a worn-out tool, he had cause enough for weariness.

During the whole of August and the early part of September the Allies had succeeded in wrapping their deliberations in a secrecy which he could not penetrate.

* Pasquier does not name her. Lady Blennerhassett thinks it was the Duchess of Dino. It is much more likely to have been the Duchess of Courland, her mother, as we find the daughter in touch with Talleyrand. The Duchy of Dino had been given to the Foreign Minister by Ferdinand IV, and he had assigned it to his nephew.

About the middle of September he learned their terms, and they were presented a few days later in "a sort of ultimatum." They themselves summarised their intentions pointedly enough in the clause: "Two-thirds of the territory added to the France of former days by the Treaty of Paris will now be detached from it." In addition, France was to pay an indemnity of 600,000,000 francs, provide 200,000,000 to build fortresses against herself in the provinces adjoining her frontiers, and maintain a foreign army of 150,000 men along her frontiers for seven years as a guarantee of peace. Prussia had triumphed. The English Ministers had wished to moderate the terms, but even they were shaken when it was pointed out that the Netherlands must be strengthened against France. Talleyrand, who rightly or wrongly believed that the whole of these harsh proceedings of the Allies would have been prevented if Louis had followed his advice at Mons, made a last effort to resist. The Council agreed with him in rejecting the terms, and he wrote a long and very able statement of his objections. He fell back on the bases of his policy as laid at Vienna. Conquest did not, in modern life, constitute a moral right to confiscation; moreover, Louis had been expressly admitted as one of the Allies against Napoleon. France was prepared to make sacrifices in return for the sacrifices of the other Powers, but he would not continue the negotiations if these exorbitant demands were pressed.

Castlereagh, who is severely censured by Lytton for joining in these harsh claims, replied that the Allies made

no pretence whatever to a right given by conquest. The whole base of their claims was the right to indemnity and to a territorial settlement that gave Europe some guarantee of stability. Some of the foreign representatives were pressing for a special notice of the defiant conclusion of Talleyrand's letter, but he decided to resign. Louis was prepared to yield ; he had no army with which to threaten resistance, and it was clear that Talleyrand's diplomatic talent would now avail him nothing. Talleyrand explains that his position was weakened by the fact that some of the King's entourage were all along in favour of a cession of territory, and that during the Hundred Days the Chamber of Representatives had already made the offer. He was, therefore, unable to press his last plea that the country would not endure such terms. He resigned his post on September 23rd, rather than sign the treaty. Metternich, Castlereagh and Stewart begged him to continue to be "a statesman of Europe," and Pasquier admits that almost all the Foreign Ministers deeply regretted his retirement, though he confesses that he himself did not share that feeling. The Tsar was pleased. His favourite, the Duc de Richelieu, was substituted for Talleyrand. Louis accepted his resignation with a mingled feeling of apprehension and relief. "I thank you for your zeal," he said to Talleyrand before the whole Cabinet ; "you are without reproach, and nothing prevents you from living peacefully at Paris." Talleyrand replied : "I have had the pleasure of rendering to the King services

enough to believe that they have not been forgotten. I am unable to see how anything could force me to leave Paris. I shall stay here ; and I shall be happy to learn that the King will not be induced to follow a line that may compromise his dynasty and France."

Napoleon had not been very wide of the mark when he said in 1814 that the Bourbons would avenge him by throwing over Talleyrand within six months. It did not, however, require any great penetration to foresee such an issue. The personality of the King and of his entourage furnished solid ground for prophecy. The curious evolution of the Tsar into a friend of Louis and enemy of Talleyrand, and his resumption of a great influence on French affairs, made further for estrangement ; and when the first elections under the Restoration gave the power to the ultra-royalist faction in the country, the situation was complete. Talleyrand retired to write his impressions of men and events. Louis provided for him the sinecure of High Chamberlain at 100,000 francs a year, and a further pension of 16,000 francs. He did not foresee that Talleyrand would take a conscientious view of his new duties, and would haunt his chair, a silent, smiling Mephistopheles, for years to come.

Talleyrand probably felt that the King would be forced to recall him in time. For the moment he betook himself to the writing of the famous memoirs which were to sustain the legend of his inscrutability until the close of the nineteenth century. It is probable that he

had written the material for the first volume (up to 1809) already. In this he gives a prosaic and brief account of his first fifty years, with lively and artistic pictures of some of his great fellow actors (especially the Duc d'Orléans), and with a very discreet and unboastful account of his share in the Revolution. The second volume and half of the third carry the story up to the middle of 1814. The rest of the work consists almost entirely of his correspondence from Vienna, during the second Restoration, and from London under Louis Philippe; the letters being scantily threaded on a brief and common-place narrative. The close of the narrative at his retirement from the Ministry is dated "Valençay, 1816." The rest was compiled in the last three years of his life. He took stringent precautions that they should not be published until thirty years after his death, and not even then if those to whom they were entrusted thought fit to postpone the publication. It was, in fact, decided in 1868 to refrain from issuing them for another generation, and they only appeared in 1891. From one end of Europe to the other there was an expression of profound disappointment when they appeared. Such stringent measures had promised stirring revelations, but the volumes contained absolutely no sensational matter and very little that was new to historians.

There is very little of the "apologia" in the memoirs, and not much of the impulse that urged most of his contemporaries to cover reams of paper with

their contradictory versions of history. He is usually content to let documents tell the story. But, though Talleyrand ignores most of the charges that were made against him, he naturally reviews history in a light that sets his own career in harmony. Lady Blennerhassett surmises that his chief object when he wrote in 1816 was to conciliate Louis XVIII, and prepare the way for a return to power. Lord Acton has expressed the same opinion. It is based on the dexterous presentation of the way in which he was forced into the Revolution, the brevity with which he dismisses the more offensive parts of his share in it, his explanation of Napoleon as a step towards the Restoration, and the fulness of his account of his share in the Restoration and the work at Vienna. But this theory has to struggle desperately with the fact that his precautions against the publications of the memoirs before the appointed time were absolute, and must have been sincere. Nothing would have been easier for a man like Talleyrand than to have secured an accidental disclosure or theft of his papers; and the fact that he used to read passages from them to a few of his friends does not further his supposed plan in the slightest degree. Ordinary conversation with them would do just as well. On the other hand, we can quite understand the air of progressive policy he gives to his career by merely assuming that he wished to make it appear consistent. A statesman who was convinced that monarchy was the best form of government for France, and who, nevertheless, took a purely

rationalist and utilitarian view of monarchy, would deal just in that way with his share in the Revolution and the Napoleonic era. It was a minor comfort to the epicurean to leave a rounded version of his life to posterity.

The literary aspect of the memoirs may be briefly dismissed. Their authenticity is now beyond dispute, but it is acknowledged that Talleyrand did not write the connected narrative. He had the habit of jotting down his ideas on scraps of paper, and leaving it to his secretaries to weave them together. This was done by M. Bacourt with the memoirs. M. Pierre Bertrand has, in his preface to the "*Lettres inédites de Talleyrand à Napoleon*," sufficiently disposed of the insinuation that Talleyrand could not write. By comparison of the Prince's notes with the secretary's drafts and the finished letters he has shown that Talleyrand counted for far more than was supposed in the composition. He might have shown, by internal evidence, that many of the letters were wholly written by Talleyrand. However, we know that Talleyrand dictated letters, or left it to his secretaries to compose them, whenever it was safe to do so. It was a sound economy; and it was not unconnected with his heavy foot-gear, which led him to prefer the couch to sitting at a table. Of the literary quality of his writing there is not much to be said. He could do "fine writing" at times, as Sainte-Beuve said; and Lord Acton admits that much of the characterisation in the memoirs is very clever. But the bulk of the work is without distinction.

Talleyrand's position in Paris during the year after his resignation was a curious one. The Hotel St. Florentin continued to be a resort of the most distinguished foreigners and many of the ablest French politicians, but the strange conflicts of the time put the Prince (Benevento had returned to the Papacy, but he had now a French title) in a peculiar attitude. The King and the Cabinet were now engaged in a struggle to defend constitutional monarchy against the excesses of the extreme Royalists. Talleyrand claimed to be at once "constitutional and anti-ministerial." The positive ground for this attitude was that the King had annulled the elections and ordered fresh ones, to give the Liberals the chance of undoing the triumph of the reactionaries. As a result of this novel situation Talleyrand found himself using almost the same language as his bitterest Royalist enemies, and declaiming against "a Cabinet that enslaved and degraded France." It is quite clear that there was an element of calculation and of prejudice in his position. His opposition became so exasperating that the King forbade him to come to the Court for some months.

After this we have a period of four years of political silence. Indeed, only three incidents call for our notice during the next fourteen years. He resigned himself once more to the position of a mere spectator, and was content to throw a light jet of sarcasm on the panorama that passed before him. English visitors to Paris, who eagerly sought to enter the Hotel St. Florentin, describe

him sitting in his favourite chair by the open window in the summer, looking across to the Tuileries. The long and luxuriant hair now bore the snow of more than sixty winters, but was curled and perfumed every morning with no less care than when he was the Abbé de Périgord. The bluish shade had passed from his grey eyes, and as age wore on his eyelids drooped more and more, so that he seemed at times to sleep during conversation. But when the moment came the old fire would flash from under his shaggy eye-brows, and his sepulchral voice would give forth a phrase that would reverberate through all the salons of Paris. The freshness and transparency of his younger complexion gave place in time to a death-like greyness. Lady Morgan, who saw him at this period, said his face was like that of a sleeping child. It was a superficial tribute to the art of the two valets who spent hours in preparing it every day. Most visitors who visited him at his hotel, or met him in the picture galleries, leaning heavily on his long stick, dressed in his long blue overcoat, and with his chin sunk in his large muslin cravat, thought they saw the face of a dead or dying man, or a piece of yellow wax-work—until his eye pierced them.

His temperate habits had spared his health and energy. In the later years he would rise about eleven, spend two or three hours in leisurely dressing and chatting to privileged visitors, take only one meal a day, and spend the evening—and far into the morning—in whist or billiards or conversation or writing. He



From a mezzotint, after the picture by Scheffer.

TALLEYRAND
(Under Louis XVIII.).

[p. 340.

had four head cooks, each the best in his department, but most observers agree that he ate sparingly, and at no time of his career sinned against his epicureanism by excessive drinking. A few glasses of choice Madeira sufficed him. He drank, or rather enjoyed, exquisite coffee, and loved to have sweet and subtle odours about him, and to move or sit amongst rare china or books and fine inlaid furniture. He never slept much. He maintained to the end of his days that his constitution took its rest while he was awake. His heart used to stand still, as it were, after every few beats, and he formed the theory that this was as beneficial as sleep.

Mme. Talleyrand had separated from him in 1815. The new regime would have points enough in his person to fix upon without being constantly reminded that he was that unutterable thing, "a married priest." He made an arrangement by which she was to remain in England, and receive from him a pension of 60,000 francs a year. He corresponded with her for some time, but she gradually dropped out of his life. Once it was being laughingly told in Paris how she had come back in spite of her arrangement with him, and Louis incautiously asked him if this was true. "Yes, Sire," he replied. "I also have had to have my 20th of March" (the date of the King's flight from Napoleon). She died in Paris in 1835. Talleyrand made constant inquiries of her in the last illness.

The Duchess of Courland seems to pass out of his life after 1815. But her daughter, Dorothy, now

Duchess of Dino, took her place, and they remained strongly attached until his death. She separated from her husband (his nephew), and lived with or near Talleyrand. As beautiful, charming, and accomplished as her mother, she brought great comfort to his later years. Her little daughter Pauline was another ray of sunshine in the last grey winter days.

Most of his time during the fourteen years of waiting for his next piece of work was spent at Valençay. Visitors from England were familiar with the large mansion with the broad Moorish towers, the round domes, and the gilt weathercocks, that broke on one at the head of the long chestnut avenue. Here, with a large park in which he could take his drives, he would retire for months together, and entertain large numbers of visitors from Paris or from England. It is worth noting that he was an exceptionally kind and generous master. A fine lady who saw a servant accidentally upset him in his bath-chair one day expressed a hope to a higher domestic that the Prince would get rid of him. "Monsieur is not a Russian prince," was the reply. A good servant was well cared for by him long after his power of service was exhausted. It is necessary to urge these small points. So many people still fail to understand what epicureanism is.

~~In 1821~~ Royer-Collard the Puritan philosopher and Liberal statesman came to live within a few leagues of Valençay. Talleyrand at once decided to lay diplomatic siege to Chateaux Vieux and secure an interesting

neighbour. The moralist is said to have been uneasy at Talleyrand's proposal to visit him, and pleaded his wife's illness and other excuses. Talleyrand drove over, nevertheless, with his graceful auxiliary, the Duchess. Chateaux Vieux was built on the summit of a slight hill, and was approached through a wild and rough country. "My dear sir," said Talleyrand when he reached the house, "you present a rather austere aspect to visitors." The Stoic was, however, disabused of his hearsay notion of Talleyrand, and became an intimate and cordial friend. Sainte-Beuve says that as Talleyrand was now in his eightieth year (he should have said seventieth), and virtue was still his *côté faible*, he wanted to strengthen it with the moralist and prepare for the later confessor. If we suppose that Talleyrand desired to avail himself for ordinary social purposes of a cultured neighbour it seems to meet the case.

He built a second country-house, at Rochecotte, on the Loire, about seven leagues from Saumur. Though he gave this mansion to the Duchess, it was his favourite residence. It was built on a verdant hill by the river, and the road led up through a fine garden, cut in the side of the hill, to the creeper-covered house. He had a large and rich library here also, and a beautiful collection of the art-treasures he loved to see about him. Japanese porcelain, Medici vases, Buhl cabinets, and other costly objects filled the rooms. Here, in later years, he often entertained the rising young men of France—Thiers, Villemain, De Broglie, &c.—as well

as his older friends. But he saw the latter pass one by one into the silence, and he marked off their ages with a smile of satisfaction at his own health and vigour.

Paris was growing accustomed to regard him as a picturesque survival of the wonderful past. He has very little share in its active life during those long years. At first he persisted in discharging his nominal duties as Chamberlain, standing in silence behind the King's chair at dinner, and so on. This was a dignity that Louis did not entirely appreciate. There is a story that he made many efforts to get rid of Talleyrand without success. After asking Talleyrand several times whether it was not true that he contemplated retiring to Valençay, and receiving bland assurances that it was not, he at last ventured to ask how far it was to Valençay. "I am not sure," Talleyrand is described as saying; "but I should think it is as far again as from here to Ghent." The story-teller says that Louis dropped no more hints on that subject. There is another Ghent story that is said to have annoyed Louis. A lady was complaining to Talleyrand that the King was not Royalist enough. "Why," he said, "he was at Ghent, and is ready to go again."

There are, as I said, only two interventions in public affairs during these fourteen years. In 1820 the Prince thought he was on the point of re-entering politics, and he projected a Ministry, but he was not invited to form one. The new Ministry introduced in the following year a law for the censorship of the press, and Talleyrand

rose to oppose it in the House of Peers. He made a long and stirring appeal for the liberty of the press, which he described as "one of the essential instruments of representative government." Boldly defending the better elements of the Revolution and the philosophers who prepared the way for it, he threatened the reactionaries with the force of public opinion. "To-day," he said, "it is not easy to deceive for long. There is someone who has more intelligence than Voltaire, more intelligence than Bonaparte, more than the Directors or any Minister, past, present, or to come—that is, everybody." The feeling is unmistakably sincere. Through the Napoleonic and Bourbonien phases he has returned substantially to the position of 1789. In 1800 he had smiled at Napoleon's treatment of the press. Experience had brought him back to moderate democracy.

Two years later he again protested against the action of the Government. When the Revolution had swept away the throne in Spain, the Royalist interest in France determined to intervene and restore it. Talleyrand had not an opportunity of delivering his speech, but he had it published and made some impression. He recalled Napoleon's unhappy intervention, and predicted that the present raid, which he described as equally immoral, would end as disastrously. He was wrong in his prophecy, but undoubtedly right in his protest. His manifesto reveals on another side the maturing of his liberal and humanitarian views.

In 1829 an incident occurred that has furnished his critics with the last of their graver charges against him—if we except his “desertion” of Charles X. On January 21st he was present at the mass in Notre Dame in commemoration of the death of Louis XVI. Suddenly a man sprang from the crowd, and felled the aged prince to the ground with a heavy blow on the face. This man was that famous Marquis de Maubreuil, whose adventures have lately been presented by Mr. Vizetelly. He had adopted this brutal means of bringing a grievance before the public. His story was that Talleyrand had engaged him in 1814 to assassinate Napoleon, and had afterwards disowned the contract. For serious and impartial readers it is enough to learn the character of this unprincipled adventurer. It is clear that he did in 1814 obtain some kind of secret mission, money, and a passport from the provisional government. Talleyrand says that a large number of men were needed for missions in the provinces, and in the stress and confusion of the time there was not a strict discrimination. At all events Maubreuil left Paris with an armed company and regular passports. In the forest of Fontainebleau he overtook the Queen of Westphalia, who was flying from France. Maubreuil stopped her equipage, ransacked her luggage, and made off with her jewellery and a considerable sum of money. He was caught and sentenced to five years’ imprisonment in 1818, but escaped to England, where he had a fine market for his stories. He returned to France in 1827,



CHARLES X.

and drew public attention by his attack on Talleyrand, then in his seventy-third year. I will only add that, after serving five years for the assault, he, at the age of eighty-three, married a prostitute (the daughter of his former coachman) for the sake of her money.

Serious history would not listen for a second to the unsupported word of such a man. The life of Talleyrand lies on a peculiar plane, and Maubreuil's accusation, that he engaged him to murder Napoleon, has been treated with the usual hypocritical gravity. The only attempt at confirmation is found by the diligent Sainte-Beuve in a floating rumour that one of Talleyrand's confidants was heard to ask: "How many millions do you ask?" As Maubreuil did not pretend to have treated with either Louis or De Pradt, and as the likelihood of such a contract being heard by others is inconceivable, the rumour would be worth little even if it were better grounded. The only other attempt at confirmation is made by the amiable Pasquier, who says that Dalberg told him men had been found who would get access to the Emperor in the uniform of chasseurs of the guard and do away with him. As Maubreuil spoke of a design of using this uniform, Pasquier concluded he was the proposed leader of the band, and Talleyrand the instigator. On this kind of evidence Sainte-Beuve is vaguely sure that we may connect Talleyrand with the idea of assassination, just as he has a "terrible doubt" whether we may not connect him with the death of Mirabeau. Thus has the mythical

Talleyrand been put together. There are those who, in such a case, would take the word of Maubreuil himself, quite apart from the thin rumour that Sainte-Beuve has captured after it has floated about Paris for half a century, and the strained recollections of Pasquier.

"I am," said Talleyrand, "an old umbrella on which the rain has beaten for forty years : a drop more or less makes no difference." He continued to watch from his long chair at the window over the Tuileries, and smile at the blunders that were hurrying the Bourbons off the stage once more. Napoleon had gone in 1821. "It is not an event," he said ; "only a piece of news." Louis died in 1824. The pious and narrow-minded Charles X was in the hands of the Clerical party. They readmitted the Jesuits in thin disguise. "M. Cuvier," asked Talleyrand of the great zoologist, "which are the most grateful animals?" Cuvier was puzzled. "The turkeys, of course," said the Prince, "because the Jesuits introduced the turkeys, and now the turkeys (*Anglice*, geese) are re-introducing the Jesuits." Someone told him that Chateaubriand was getting deaf. "He fancies he's deaf," said Talleyrand, "because he does not hear people talking about him any longer." At last the crisis came, and the king-maker stepped into public life once more.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAST ACT

TALLEYRAND had acquired through his long experience a sense of political equilibrium. Men of science point out to us in lowly marine organisms a little vesicle filled with fluid and containing a little stone. It is the organ by which they feel that they are ascending or descending. In some such way Talleyrand *felt* the motion when the governing power had begun to descend a slope. In the later twenties he knew, as many did, that Charles X was moving towards the abyss into which he had seen so many plunge. The King was too narrowly Catholic to love Talleyrand, and, though their relation was amiable enough during the Martignac Ministry, Talleyrand's house became once more the centre of the opposition. All the older Liberals and a large number of the younger men used to gather about his couch in the morning, or fill his rooms in the evening from eleven to one. The Martignac Ministry was the last effort to stem the tide of reaction. But Charles X was quietly hostile to its enlightened policy, and he dismissed it at the first check. On August 8th (1829) he bade the Prince de Polignac, a man of his own views, form a Clerical ministry. Talleyrand left Paris for Rochecotte

in the interest of his health. It was said in Paris that, as when Napoleon set out for Russia, he had declared it "the beginning of the end."

At Rochecotte he was visited by Molé, Sebastiani, de Broglie, Villemain, and numbers of other politicians. Thiers also was there, but Talleyrand regarded him rather as a promising writer than a politician. There was no plotting at Rochecotte. It was unnecessary. While Polignac was receiving directions from the Virgin Mary in visions for the governing of France, Liberal leagues were being organised everywhere, and the second revolution was preparing. "A thousand sinister rumours are circulating in the capital," said an orator from the tribune. In March (1830) Roger Collard presented to the King an address, voted by the Chamber and drawn up by Guizot and himself. The King replied by proroguing the Chamber until September. "So you have decided on prorogation," said Talleyrand to one of the ministers. "Well, I think I shall buy a little property in Switzerland." Charles X declared he would make no concessions. Weakness had destroyed Louis XVI; "for my part I have no alternative but the throne or the scaffold." "He forgets the post-chaise," said Talleyrand.

In May Talleyrand was back at Rochecotte, tending his peaches and flowers as he loved to do, and discussing the situation with Thiers, Mignet, and others. The elections had gone heavily against the ministers. On June 11th he wrote to the Princess de Vaudemont that



LOUIS PHILIPPE, KING OF THE FRENCH.

"the decisive moment was at hand." On the 14th he wrote to Barante, "We are moving onward towards an unknown world, without pilot or compass: the only certain thing is that it will all end in shipwreck." Although he had certainly discussed the change from Bourbons to Orleanists with his friends, he was really in a state of great concern and anxiety. It was not at all certain that they would be consulted as to the future. The excesses of the Clerical and Royalist party had so deeply moved the country that a bloody rebellion and mob-triumph was possible. In July he was back at Paris. On the 26th appeared the royal ordinances that would destroy the liberty of the press, dissolve the Chamber, and manipulate the elections. On the following day he saw the troops marching to destroy the machines of the rebellious printers, and the first barricades raised in their path. It is said that he had the large golden sign, "Hotel Talleyrand," taken down from over the gate of his house. His darkest recollections of 1792 were revived. On the morning of the 28th the streets of Paris were found to be cut everywhere with barricades. The tricolour floated from the roof of the Hotel de Ville and Notre Dame.

The long days of the 28th and 29th were spent in great anxiety. His secretary (or that extremely imaginative person who has dressed up and expounded Colmache's "Recollections") says that when the tocsin rang out on the morning of the 28th the Prince exclaimed: "Hark! We triumph." When the man

asked *who* triumphed, he is said to have answered : "Hush ! I will tell you to-morrow." On the 29th he tried to induce the peers to take a definite line, but they were too timid. On the 30th the rumour spread that the King had fled from St. Cloud. He sent his secretary to make inquiries at the palace, and heard that it was so. He then sent Colmache with a note, to be burned in the secretary's presence or returned to him, to the sister of the Duc d'Orléans, Mme. Adélaïde, who was at Neuilly with the Duke. The note merely said : "Madame may have full confidence in the bearer, who is my secretary." The secretary was instructed to tell her that the Duke must come to Paris and call himself Lieutenant-General of the kingdom—"the rest will follow." Before night the Duke was at the Palais Royal. Charles X had withdrawn his inspired ordinances at three o'clock that afternoon, but it was too late. The Republicans were gradually controlled, and the Duke of Orleans was accepted as the head of the State.

This was Talleyrand's share in the second Revolution, and the fifth change of government in France during his career. He took his last oath of loyalty without hesitation. Speaking once to an Imperialist who distrusted him, he said : "I have never kept fealty to anyone when he has himself ceased to obey the dictates of common sense. If you will judge all my actions by this rule you will find that I have been eminently consistent." Certainly, there is no serious need of justifying his conduct in 1830. He had plainly

told Louis XVIII the conditions on which the Bourbons were reinstated. "Governments exist to-day solely for the people." Louis and his friends had tried to reverse the principle. Charles X had thought government a branch of the Church.

Talleyrand's restoration to public affairs was a matter of course. Louis-Philippe offered him the Foreign Ministry, but he felt that the embassy at London would be at once less onerous and more important. Once more Talleyrand's bias towards England proved its soundness. They agreed that London must be made the pivot of France's foreign policy. Austria, Russia, and Prussia looked with little favour on the new outburst of French revolutionary ardour, or on the monarchy it had set up on deliberate utilitarian grounds. The best guarantee for the preservation of peace was to convince and draw close to England. Here, again, where the principles on which the throne of Louis-Philippe was raised should be familiar enough, there was (apart from the trouble that supervened in Belgium) a very natural tendency to view the outburst with alarm. Wellington had said in 1815, when the Duke of Orléans was proposed for the French throne, that he would be "merely a well-bred usurper." What would he say now? The instability of Louis-Philippe's first ministry and the propagandist expressions of the revolutionaries at Paris made the situation more difficult. It was decided that Talleyrand would be most useful at London. He received a very amiable reply

from Lord Aberdeen (then Foreign Minister) to the announcement of his appointment, and left Paris on September 22nd, and reached "beautiful England, so rich, so peaceful," a few days later. The cannonade at Dover that welcomed his arrival reminded him of the day when he had last quitted the country under an ignominious order of expulsion.

There were many sources of opposition to Talleyrand's mission, and he was at first exposed to great annoyance. Caricatures in Piccadilly shops represented him as a cripple leading the blindfolded Kings of Europe, or as a trainer leading a monkey dressed in the livery of the new French monarchy. In society he had to face a good deal of prejudice against the new regime. He had his own way of answering it. "Say what you like," the Russian Ambassador's wife once said in his presence, "what has taken place in France is a flagrant usurpation." "You are quite right, madame," he replied. "Only it is to be regretted it did not take place fifteen years ago when your master, Alexander, desired it." The Princess Lieven afterwards became friendly. On the other hand he was well received by Aberdeen and cordially welcomed by Wellington and his older friends.

The personnel of his embassy was not impressive, he himself admits. In the obituary notice of him a few years later in the *Morning Post*, he is described as receiving visitors in his salon with a high hat and a huge tricolour rosette on it, while three young sansculottists

l lounged with revolutionary freedom on the couch. This was an echo of the hostility of 1830. Talleyrand had always been strongly opposed to the obtrusion of French revolutionary feelings at other courts or capitals, and is not likely to have furnished the slightest ground for this gibe over his coffin. He had brought the Duchess de Dino with him, and this relieved the character of his mission. Such productions of the time as "Raikes' Journal" indicate how prominent and distinguished a place he at once took up in the country. In fact the writer in the *Morning Post* himself says that in time Palmerston was almost the only man to stand conspicuously aloof from the aged Prince, and speak of him disdainfully as "old Tally."

[The great issue that complicated his work at London was the revolt of Belgium against the Dutch. Talleyrand had looked forward to the not uncongenial task of introducing the new monarchy into the respectable society of the older ones in Europe by prevailing on England to espouse its cause.] Knowing well the pacific feeling of Louis-Philippe and his political integrity, he had every reason to hope for success in this without more than an easy and cheerful use of his own accomplishments. Aristocratic feeling even in England was suspicious and reserved. He would disarm it, and place in the hands of the French Foreign Office the strong card of England's friendship. [Unfortunately for his peace, the spirit of the Revolution spread immediately into Belgium, and the Dutch were gradually driven out

of the country. It was England especially that had created this joint kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815, and she now looked with concern on what seemed to be an attempt of France to regain the control of Belgium.]

The news from France increased the difficulty. There was a strong and loud demand at Paris for the annexation of the rich, and largely French, provinces of Belgium, and this was echoed by a considerable party at Brussels. So powerful was the feeling and so moving the temptation, that the French Cabinet itself inclined to it and the King hesitated. From the end of October until the end of February Talleyrand had to fight the whole of Paris, as well as allay anxiety at London. But he was convinced that a general war would ensue if France directly or indirectly recovered control of Belgium, and he fought bravely for peace against King and ministers and people. Non-intervention was the word that he pleaded unceasingly at London and thundered at Paris. There is a story that when someone at London asked him to define non-intervention he said it was "a metaphysical and political term that meant pretty much the same thing as intervention." He may have said so for the fun of the phrase, but his correspondence with Paris shows that he was in deepest earnest about it.

His policy at London was perfectly straight, but unfortunately his diplomatic history made many hesitate to accept it as such. It is said that once under the Empire some piece of news relating to Spain had reached

the knowledge of the Spanish Minister, and Napoleon grumbled. Talleyrand said he would put the matter right. He went to M. d'Azara, said that he had something important to whisper to him regarding his country, and then told him precisely the piece of news that had leaked out. D'Azara was so far unable to conceive Talleyrand speaking the truth in such a matter that he concluded the whole story was a hoax, and wrote to his Government to disregard the information he had sent them. At London in 1830 and 1831 Talleyrand was pleading in perfect sincerity for non-intervention, but Palmerston (who came to the Foreign Office in November) and others were unable to believe him. The more he assured them of his struggle against his own Government, the more they suspected him. Palmerston dreaded his diplomatic ascendancy, and looked for his secret inspiration in every movement towards war and territorial expansion that was reported from Paris.

[There was no unreality about Talleyrand's statement that he was fighting his own Government.] In November they sent Count Flahaut to assist him in London and induce him to favour the scheme of a partition of Belgium between Holland, England, Prussia, and France. Talleyrand told him he would cut off his right hand before signing such a treaty, and sent him back to Paris. Sebastiani (Foreign Minister) then sounded Talleyrand on a scheme for making the King's son, the Duc de Nemours, King of Belgium, and was told that it was a "mad idea." Talleyrand, in fact,

resorted to the device of writing constantly to the King's sister, Mme. Adélaïde, and told her the Duke "must absolutely refuse" the Belgian crown if it were offered to him. He believed that Belgium would not remain a distinct nation (in which his sagacity failed altogether), and might eventually fall to France, but for the moment it was "a secondary matter." "We must make France first," he said. But the Congress at Brussels on February 3rd did invite the Duc de Nemours to the throne, and Paris wavered once more. Talleyrand signed a protocol at London engaging France to refuse the crown for the Duc de Nemours. Sebastiani complained seriously, and Talleyrand had to submit, but added that "if it seemed to him at any time that there would be imminent danger of war if he refused to sign the protocols of the Conference, and the real interests of France were not at stake, he would sign them in accordance with the first instructions given him," and threatened to leave London if the situation did not improve in Paris. Moreover, when, under the influence of a deputy from Brussels, the King wavered again, and Sebastiani sent word that his reply was postponed, Talleyrand refused to submit his message to Palmerston.

The Conference to which he alludes was sitting on the Belgian question at London. When England proposed an international Conference, Talleyrand was instructed to demand that it be held at Paris, and he did so. His personal opinion was, however, that Paris was in too insecure a condition, and he was not disappointed



From a sketch by Count D'Orsay.

TALLEYRAND
(At London, in 1831).

[p. 358.

when London was decided on. He had made up his mind from the first that Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg was the fittest candidate for the Belgian throne. To this there was no serious opposition at London, and a change of Ministry at Paris in March brought Casimir Périer to the head of affairs. With this able statesman and friend Talleyrand could make more progress, though he described his advance on Ancona as "a piece of filibustering." By the middle of July Leopold was accepted in Belgium, and the irritating problem was settled.

But one difficulty was removed only to lead to another. Talleyrand had in April (1831) obtained from the Allies of 1815 a secret promise that some of the fortresses raised at that time against France should be demolished. Louis-Philippe wanted to be able to announce this welcome decision in his July address. As Talleyrand was dilatory in obtaining permission, the King made the announcement and declared he would not evacuate Belgium until the forts were destroyed. His ambassador had meantime secured the assent of the Powers, but had also signed a promise to evacuate Belgium in August. The King was much annoyed, but Talleyrand politely requested him and Périer not to make so much noise about the fortresses. To a private correspondent he wrote that he was tired to death of fighting Paris, when his whole attention was needed at London. He could see nothing but *amour propre* in the agitation at Paris. The struggle continued for some

time. Louis-Philippe wanted different forts destroyed from those that Talleyrand had named, and wrote angrily to him. His ambassador sent a polite and sarcastic reply, and the names of the forts remained unchanged when the matter was settled in January. Talleyrand's weariness expressed itself in the following passage of a letter to Sebastiani, which would probably be submitted to Louis-Philippe: "The King knows that I am a partisan of no dynasty. Since the days of Louis XVI I have served all Governments out of attachment to my country. I have abandoned them the moment they sacrificed the interests of France to personal interests. If the King is going to listen to domestic chatterers, he must not count on me." It was the voice of the King-maker.

At London he had maintained his diplomatic ascendancy, though Palmerston annoyed him exceedingly. There was a good deal of ill-natured carping at his distinction. One day Lord Londonderry was misguided enough to voice this in the House of Lords. He referred to the influence of a certain "astute diplomatist" over the Conference, and said it was "disgusting" to see English Ministers in such assiduous attendance on this man. Talleyrand, he peevishly reminded them, had been the Minister of Napoleon, of Louis, and of Charles, before he took the service of Louis-Philippe. Lord Goderich protested that Talleyrand's character should have protected him from such an attack, and then Wellington arose. After speaking of his relations to Talleyrand, he said: "I have no

hesitation in saying that at that time, in every one of the great transactions in which I have been engaged with Prince Talleyrand, no man could have conducted himself with more firmness and ability with regard to his own country, or with more uprightness and honour in all his communications with the Ministers of other countries than Prince Talleyrand. . . . No man's public and private character had ever been so much belied as both the public and private character of that individual." His words were greeted with loud cheers. Lord Holland added that "forty years' acquaintance with the noble individual referred to enabled him to bear his testimony to the fact that although those forty years had been passed during a time peculiarly fraught with calumnies of every description, there had been no man's private character more shamefully traduced, and no man's public character more mistaken and misrepresented, than the private and public character of Prince Talleyrand." A visitor the next morning found the aged diplomatist in tears, with the *Times* in his hand. He wrote to a friend that "at Paris, for which he was killing himself, no one would do as much for him." Cynics have not failed to point the moral. But it was merely a grateful exaggeration. Casimir P rier wrote to him soon afterwards : "Posterity will do you that full justice which, in times of social agitation, those who have charge of public interests must not expect from their contemporaries." Unfortunately, posterity still likes to shudder over romantic wickedness.

Casimir Périer died in May, and there were not a few at Paris who thought of Talleyrand as his successor. The Prince was rather bent on retiring from public life. He went over to Paris, and found a condition of comparative anarchy resulting from the death of the strong leader. However, an abler Ministry than ever was got together, and in October he returned to London. If the chroniclers may be trusted, his wit had not diminished with age. A poet of suspicious repute had issued a piece on which his opinion was asked. "C'est que la corruption engendre les vers," he replied. A more questionable story is that he found Montrond one day in a fit on the floor, clawing at the carpet with his nails. "It looks as if he is quite determined to go down," he is described as saying.

The Belgian trouble was still unsettled, and in October he signed a convention with England to compel the Dutch to retire from Antwerp in obedience to the Conference. French troops were sent into Belgium, the Prussians massed a considerable force on the frontier, and this was a brief period of great anxiety. The Dutch did not finally yield until May, 1833. But this difficulty had scarcely disappeared before a fresh one arose. The Sultan of Turkey had appealed to Russia for help in subduing a rebellious vassal, and signed a treaty with the Tsar in July. The French were, however, jealous of Russian interference, and Talleyrand had to press at London for joint action. Nothing was done, however, when Russia anticipated

them, though there was no slight risk of war at one time.

The crown and end of Talleyrand's work in England came in April, 1834, when he signed the alliance between England, France, Spain, and Portugal. In August of that year he left England, and shortly afterwards resigned his position of ambassador. A number of reasons for this step are assigned in his letters at the time, though his age and the completion of his work at London by an alliance might be deemed sufficient. To Lady Jersey he spoke of a personal affliction, which is surmised to have been the death of the Countess Tyszkiewitz. To Mme. Adélaïde he complained of his growing infirmity of the legs, and the behaviour of Palmerston; and also that her son, the Duc d'Orléans, had been telling his own English guests at Valençay that he was past work. He declared to Von Gagern that he "only quitted affairs because there were none to attend to"; while to the King he explained that he had now secured "the right of citizenship" for France in Europe, and his work was over. All these motives influenced him, no doubt; but there was another one, of some interest. He had witnessed at London the growing agitation for reform, and completely failed to appreciate it. As the agitation wore on, he spoke moodily of the state of France in 1789. The convocation of the first reformed parliament in 1833 he described as "the States-General of London." He was too old to understand the new movement, to see a permanent and proper advance

beneath all the menacing clamour. England was no longer "so rich and peaceful." He wrote slightly to the King of her value to France, and thought rather of a coalition of Europe against what he thought to be a rising tide of anarchy.

He resisted, therefore, the kindly pressure of the King and retired to Valençay. ["There is," he wrote to a correspondent, "an interval between life and death that should be employed in dying decently."] There still remained three or four years of life. It is said that he offered to go as ambassador to Vienna in 1835, but Louis-Philippe was apprehensive of advances being made to him by the Bourbons. In that year were published, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, George Sand's outrageous *Lettres d'un voyageur*. Imagining her traveller to stand by moonlight before the chateau of Valençay, she puts into his mouth some of the most repulsive calumnies against Talleyrand, as the silhouetted forms appear at the windows. The subject of her ridiculous nightmares was then an old man in his eighty-first year, peacefully concluding his memoirs and passing the last slow days in the company of the Duchess of Dino and her young daughter, Pauline. Maubreuil was hardly less chivalrous. George Sand was a not distant neighbour, and her description of his "daily round" may be less imaginative. He rose at eleven, and spent three or four hours (?) in the hands of his valets. At three he had a drive round the park with his doctor, and at five enjoyed "the most succulent and artistic dinner in



From a lithograph by Jeffrey, after a bust by Dantan.

TALLEYRAND
(Portrait-caricature, in later life).

[p. 364.

France." After a few words to his family, he would drive in the park again until eleven, and then work in his own room until five o'clock. Visitors still made their pilgrimages to Valençay. We find Sir Robert and Lady Peel there in 1836. His mind is described as retaining its vigour and perspicacity, but by the end of 1835 loss of power in the legs began to foreshadow the end. His temperate habits had their reward in good general health. It is said that after death his organs—apart from the local trouble—were found to be singularly sound for an octogenarian.]

On his eighty-third birthday he wrote a few lines that reveal the pain and weariness that were growing on him. He concluded a rather gloomy summary of his long life with the words: "What result from it all but physical and moral exhaustion, a complete discouragement as to the future and disdain for the past." On that day he had asked Dupanloup to dinner, but the rector of Saint Sulpice pleaded his work in excuse. "He does not know his business," said Talleyrand with a smile. For some time the Prince had been importuned from many sides to make his peace with the Church. It is said that on one occasion at Valençay he incautiously asked the little Pauline one Sunday where she had been. "I have been to mass," she said, "to pray the good God to give you better sentiments." The Duchess of Dino was deeply anxious to see him reconciled. Letters reached him from very old friends with the same aim. Royer-Collard advised it. The Archbishop of Paris,

Mgr. Quelen, who had been coadjutor to his uncle, was pressing as far as discretion allowed. He had obtained instructions from Rome as to the minimum that need be asked of the illustrious apostate. In 1835 he had received the dying Princess Talleyrand into the Church, and made it an occasion for a strong appeal to her husband. Talleyrand politely thanked him for his interest.

What was the real state of Talleyrand's mind in regard to religion as he approached the end? It is quite impossible to discover it with certainty. It seems probable that throughout life Talleyrand maintained an attitude of agnosticism, standing between the dogmatic theism or dogmatic atheism of his friends. It seems clear, too, that his agnosticism had not very deep philosophic roots, and it would not be unnatural for it to yield under the pressure of approaching death. It is true that he often uses theistic expressions in his letters from 1814 onwards, but that may be merely a concession to the new fashions introduced with the new monarchy. Napoleon had openly described him as a man who "did not believe in God." But there are two facts that strongly dispose us to take a diplomatic view of Talleyrand's "reconciliation." The first is that he had a strong incentive to go through the form of submission. There were frequently disorderly scenes at the funerals of his non-Christian friends, and he betrayed a great concern lest his own exit from the stage should be marred by the same disorder. He even

spoke towards the end of leaving France, and it was thought that he wanted to die out of the country so as to be buried in peace without submission. And the second fact is the way in which he postponed the act of reconciliation until the very last and inevitable moment, as we shall see.

In March his life-long friend, Count Reinhard, died, and Talleyrand read a paper on him at the Institut. The hall was crowded with scholars and politicians, and Talleyrand was greeted with a remarkable ovation. He read his paper in a strong and sonorous voice, and then made his way from the room between two compact hedges of admirers, who bowed their heads as he passed. "A greater than Voltaire," cried Victor Cousin. There is little in the oration to explain the enthusiasm. To us, indeed, who read it in full consciousness of Talleyrand's whole career, and not merely in connection with his last work at London, it has a curious look. The only passage of particular interest is where he describes the qualities that make the great diplomatist. Of these "good faith" is the first. He protests against the "prejudice" that conceives diplomacy as "a science of ruse and duplicity." "If good faith is ever necessary it is in political transactions." The passage rings with perfect sincerity; but the tradition that Talleyrand's successes have left in the school of diplomacy is of a very different kind. The speech was plain and ineloquent. Lady Blennerhasset thinks Talleyrand had nearly every gift of this life bestowed on him except

“respect.” It is impossible to see in the splendid enthusiasm evoked by his last public appearance at Paris anything else but a great demonstration of respect.

The suppuration in his legs ceased some time before his death, and he spoke cheerfully of a journey to Italy, but in April the last symptoms made their appearance. He bore his pain with great restraint and dignity. Dupanloup’s scruples had been overruled by the archbishop, and he was now a frequent visitor at the Hotel St. Florentin. There seems to have been no conversation about religion in these visits, but there was a business-like arrangement of terms. Until the end of March he politely evaded all Dupanloup’s attempts to make an opening. At last he promised the duchess he would summon the priest if he fell seriously ill. He then submitted to him a draft of a recantation, but as it contained an implication that he had been free to marry, Dupanloup had to reject it, and proposed another form on May 12th. He watched Talleyrand’s face with great eagerness as he read it, but not a muscle moved. The Prince asked him to leave it.

Anthrax had set in on May 11th, and all Paris was interested in the end of the great diplomatist and the question of reconciliation. Candles were burning in every chapel in the city. Messengers were running to and fro between Saint Sulpice and the archbishop’s house, as they had run so many times between foreign embassies

when Talleyrand was obstinate. On the evening of the 16th he was visibly sinking, and his niece implored him to sign the form. He promised to do so at six in the morning. When he grew worse during the night, and they pressed him to sign, he observed it was not yet six. When the hour came Dupanloup sent in to him the little Pauline dressed for her first communion, and as Talleyrand caressed her the clock struck six. Dupanloup and the witnesses entered, and Talleyrand signed. "I have never ceased," the paper ended, "to regard myself as a child of the Church. I again deplore the actions of my life that have caused it pain, and my last wishes are for its supreme head." Dupanloup had politely refrained from inserting such phrases as "sin" and "repentance." It was a gracious acknowledgment of errors committed in a wayward age. This was the price of a peaceful and honourable burial. Gregory XVI is said to have described it as one of the triumphs of his reign. The document was antedated two months.

During the day the King came to bid him farewell. Talleyrand was greatly moved at the honour, and received the King ceremoniously. Dupanloup was in constant attendance, and succeeded in inducing him to confess and receive the sacraments. As the day wore on he became more and more exhausted, and approached the end. In the adjoining room all Paris was waiting for the close. Statesmen, nobles and scholars, young and old, were gathered in little groups before the curtain that cut off the bedroom from the library. At a quarter to four the

doctor was called, and there was a general movement towards the door. The curtain was drawn back, and all saw the figure of the Prince. He sat on the edge of the bed supported by two servants—a “dying lion,” says one witness. His long, white hair now hung loosely about the pallid and shrunken face. The head drooped on the chest, but now and again he slowly raised it and looked with the last faint shadow of a smile on the great crowd that had come to pay the tribute of France. It was a “grand spectacle,” said Royer-Collard ; the fall of “the last cedar of Lebanon.” He “died in public,” “died amidst regal pomp and reverence,” say other eye-witnesses. The duchess and her daughter knelt by the bedside. He was conscious to the end—conscious that his career was ending amidst a manifestation of love, power and profound respect as great as he could ever have wished.

He was accorded by State and Church the funeral of a prince. In the Church of the Assumption, where he was to be interred until the vault was ready at Valençay, an imposing ceremony was held, at which Europe was represented. Over the catafalque on which his worn frame lay was emblazoned by priestly hands the motto of his house : “Re que Diou”—I lived so high that God alone towered above me. It was his last triumph.

The story-tellers close their version of his career with the statement that, as the cortège started some time after for the gates of Paris, to take the body to

Valençay, and the driver called out the usual question : "Which barrier?" a deep voice replied from underneath the hearse : "La barrière de l'Enfer."

* * * * *

That there are unanswered and perhaps unanswerable questions in regard to Talleyrand's career must be admitted : that his personality is obscure and enigmatic can no longer be maintained. The work of successive historians and biographers, which I have put together in succinct form in this study, has made him intelligible. When we set aside demonstrable myths and legends, and when we decline to entertain the vicious charges of his enemies that are unsupported by other testimony, we have a tolerably clear character and consistent career.

We see a boy of many excellent qualities thrust into a school of hypocrisy, a youth of sensuous and amorous temper and sceptical views admitted into a Church that asks no serious questions, a sincere patriot serving a country that deliberately changes its rulers five times in the course of his life. The tortuousness is largely in the path marked out for him. A refined epicurean, but no sybarite, he set out with deliberate intent to enjoy life. It is no injustice to point out that he fell short in practice of ideals of personal and political asceticism that he never even respected in theory. A certain laxity of morals, a disposition to pass over in silence the misdeeds of those who employed him, a readiness to take money for service done, were parts or consequences of his map of life. He was no

Stoic, and would be the last to expect us to strain his character into harmony with Stoic ideals.

But if Talleyrand chose the comfortable valleys instead of scaling the arduous heights of great personal or political virtue, he had, none the less, distinct graces of character. Few men of recent times have been so heavily and so successfully calumniated. He was not licentious, nor corrupt, nor vindictive, nor treacherous, nor devoid of idealism. He was humane, generous, affectionate, a sincere patriot, a lover of justice and peace. He sought a comfortable existence, but he desired to avoid inflicting pain or discomfort on others. He was sensitive of the honour of France, proud of her greatness, happy in serving her with distinction. He was a kind master, a genial and liberal friend, a lover of domestic peace and harmony. He sought throughout his career to disarm violence, prevent bloodshed, resist oppression, and help on the reign of good taste, good sense and good feeling.

His political career is to-day free from ambiguity. He was a Churchman by accident and the fault of others. He did right in abandoning the Church. Some of his Catholic royal critics in 1815 declared that the mistake of his life was not to have clung to the Church, and enjoyed his wine and his mistress in the tranquility and comfort of the cardinalate. He was not low enough in character for that. He behaved towards the Church he had left with a moderation and absence of passion that is rare in the embittered and calumniated apostate. Not

a single change in his later political career can be seriously challenged. | In later years he said, in varying phraseology, that he had never conspired except with the whole of France, and had never deserted a cause until it had deserted itself or common sense. He had no belief in the divine right of either kings or mobs ; and no ruler he met had charm enough or real greatness enough to win from him a personal allegiance. With his last breath (and in his will) he spoke tenderly of Napoleon, and commended the ex-Emperor's family to his heirs. | He served France more in deserting Louis XVI than those who remained faithful ; and his successive desertion of the Directors, Napoleon, and Charles X needs no defence. | The only rational ground of censure is that he kept so entirely together his personal interest and the high cause of France and humanity that he served through all these vicissitudes of his country. This will withhold from him for ever the title of self-forgetting greatness, the nobler enthusiasm, which we so fitly reverence, of losing sight of self at times in an exalted cause. He made his choice, and he will abide by it.

INDEX

- Abbés Commendataires, 9, 21.
 Aberdeen, Lord, 354.
 Aboukir, The Battle of, 169.
 Acton, Lord, on Talleyrand, 268, 337, 338.
 Adams, President, 158.
 Addington, 192.
 Adélaïde, Mme., 352, 356.
 Agent-General of the Clergy, 39.
 Alexander I, 228, 248, 261-4, 286, 307, 316.
 America, Talleyrand's Impression of, 136.
 American Envoys, Talleyrand and the, 158-60.
 American War of Independence, 48.
 Amiens, Treaty of, 193.
 Amsterdam, Talleyrand at, 143.
 Ancien Régime, The, 24-34.
 Anna, The Archduchess, 264-316.
 Arnault, 64.
 Arnold, General, 134.
 Artois, M. d., 70, 75, 290.
 Assembly of Notables, The, 52.
 Auch, The Archbishop of, 21.
 Austerlitz, 233.
 Austria, The First Napoleonic War with, 185.
 Autun, Talleyrand promoted to See of, 47, 57.
 Azara, M., 357.
 Bacourt, M. de, 72.
 Barras, 149, 152, 159.
 Barry, Mme. du, 18.
 Barthélemy, 154.
 Bastide, Charges of, 161.
 Bastille, Taking of the, 74.
 Bautzen, The Battle of, 275.
 Beaumetz, M. de, 135, 138.
 Belgium, Independence of, 355, 363.
 Bellechasse, Convent of, 29.
 Benevento, The Princedom of, 242.
 Bernier, The Abbé, 203.
 Bernadotte, 175.
 Berry, The Duc de, 295, 316, 325.
 Beugnot, 291, 322, 330.
 Biron, The Duc de (see Lauzun).
 Blacas, 298.
 Boisgelin, The Abbé de, 40.
 Blücher, 325, 330.
 Boissy d'Anglas 139.
 Bollmann, 132.
 Bonaparte, Joseph, 187, 193, 206.
 Bonaparte, Lucien, 173, 176.
 Bonaparte, Napoleon (see Napoleon)
Bookman on Talleyrand's Birth, 2, 140.
 Bordeaux, Talleyrand's Journey to,
 Boulogne, The Camp of, 231.
 Brionne, The Cardinal de, 8, 33.
 Brionne, The Countess de, 47, 319.
 Brougham on Talleyrand, 212, 213.
 Bruix, 172.
 Brumaire, The *coup d'état* of, 173-6.
 Brussels, Congress of, 358.
 Cagliostro, 28, 33.
 Calonne, 51.
 Calumnies of Talleyrand, 13, 44.
 Cambacérès, 179, 195.
 Cambrai, 324.
 Campo Formio, Treaty of, 156, 162, 165.
 Cardinalate, Talleyrand misses the, 47.
 Carlsbad, Talleyrand at, 318.
 Carnot, 150.
 Casenove, 135.
 Castellane, 147,

- Castlereagh, 297, 300, 304, 333.
 Ceylon, 193.
 Chalais, The Princesse de, 3.
 Chamfort, 24, 31, 32.
 Champ de Mars, The mass in the, 91-94.
 Champagny, 254, 258.
 Charles IV, 253.
 Charles X, 348, 350.
 Charlotte, 196, 212.
 Chartres, The Duc de, 33.
 Châtre, The Countess de la, 131.
 Chateaubriand, 145, 214, 320, 322.
 Chateaux Vieux, 343.
 Chauvelin, The Marquis de, 117.
 Chénier, 139.
 Chivalry, Orders of, 27.
 Choderlos de Laclos, 64.
 Choiseul, 48.
 Choiseul-gouffier, 5, 29.
 Church, Talleyrand's attitude to the, 38, 82, 90.
 Civil constitution of the Clergy, The, 96.
 Clergy, The French, before the Revolution, 8, 12, 22.
 Clergy, The French, during the Revolution, 65-78.
 Clichy Club, The, 153.
 Cobentzl, Count, 186.
 Collège d'Harcourt, 3.
 Colmache, 351, 352.
 Colonisation, Talleyrand on, 146.
 Compiègne, Talleyrand at, 291-2.
 Concordat, Drafting of the, 202-7.
 Condorcet, 106.
 Consalvi, Cardinal, at Paris, 204.
 Constant, B. 155, 178, 287.
 Constantinople, Napoleon's designs on, 169.
 Constituent Assembly, The, 86-109.
 Constitutional Club, The, 145.
 Constitution Committee, Talleyrand's defence of the, 89.
 Constitution, Completion of the, 109.
 Continental system of Napoleon, The, 236.
 Copenhagen, Battle of, 192.
 Council of Ancients, The, 140, 173.
 Council of the Five Hundred, The, 140, 173.
 Courland, The Duchess of, 277, 279, 332, 341.
 Court, Cost of the, 9.
 Cousin, V., 367.
 Cuvier, 348.
 Dalberg, Bishop, 240, 247, 283, 300.
 D'Antigny, Marquis of, 1, 140.
 Danton, 123, 125, 127.
 Daunou, 139.
 Décadi, The, 20.
 Declaration of St. Ouen, The, 293.
 Delille, The Abbé, 31.
 Democratic Principles of Talleyrand, 60.
 Department of Paris, Talleyrand on the, 110, 121.
 Desmoulins, C., 72.
 Dillon, Archbishop, 8, 43, 96.
 Dino, The Duchess of, 280, 300, 309, 332, 341.
 Dino, The Duchy of, 332.
 Directorate, Paris during the, 143.
 Divorce of Josephine, The, 270.
 Dumouriez, 117, 142, 216.
 Dupanloup, Mgr., 2, 365, 368.
 Dupont de Nemours, 50, 52.
 Duroveray, 117.
 Dutch and Belgians, The, 335-63.
 East Indies, Talleyrand's Ship to the, 138.
Éclaircissements, Talleyrand's, 156, 170.
 Education in the Eighteenth Century, 5-6.
 Education, Talleyrand's great Speech on, 106-9.
 Egypt, Napoleon's Expedition to, 161, 168-9.
 Election-Manifesto of Talleyrand, 60.
 Enghien, Murder of the Duc d', 215, 20.
 England, Opening of the War with, 227.
 Erfurt, The Conference at, 259-64.
 Eylau, The Battle of, 247.
Femmes de Talleyrand, Les, 36.
 Ferdinand, 253.
 Fesch, Cardinal, 221, 270.
 Feuillants, Club of the, 87.
 Finance, Talleyrand's acquaintance with, 50.
 First Consul, Napoleon becomes, 179.

- Fitzgerald, Lord E., 142.
 Flahaut, Count, 357.
 Flahaut, The Countess de, 34, 98, 142.
 Flight of the King, 104.
 Foreign Ministry, Talleyrand's Introduction to, 150.
 Fox, 113.
 Fouché, 173, 188, 266, 271, 326, 329.
 Francis, Sir Philip, 147.
 Franklin at Passy, 48.
 Friedland, The Battle of, 247.
 Fructidor, the *coup d'état* of, 153-5, 195-8.
 Gagern, Baron von, 196, 213, 241, 246.
 Galiffet, The Hotel, 164, 210.
 Gallicanism, 200.
 Gambling before the Revolution, 26.
 Gambling, Talleyrand's Confession of, 95.
 Gazette, Talleyrand's Letter to the, 129.
 General Assembly of the Clergy, The, 19, 40-42.
 Genlis, Mme. de, 7, 11, 29, 131.
 Gentz, 306, 307.
 George III, 113, 182.
 Georges, 216.
 Ghent, Louis XVIII at, 321.
 Gobel, Bishop, 97.
 Goderich, Lord, 360.
 Goethe, 264, 265.
 Godoy, 182, 252.
 Gohier, 171, 173.
 Gramont, The Duchesse de, 33.
 Grand, Mme., 147-9, 209, 212.
 Grand Chamberlain, Talleyrand as, 221.
 Grand Elector, 179.
 Gratuitous Gifts of the Clergy, 20, 40.
 Gregory XVI, 369.
 Grenville, 114, 118, 183.
 Grimaldi, Mgr. de, 56.
 Guizot, 350.
 Gustavus IV, 230.
 Hamburg, Talleyrand at, 141-2.
 Hamilton, Colonel Alex., 135.
 Hanover, 236.
 Hardenberg, Prince, 304, 308.
 Haugewitz, 234.
 Hauterive, M. d', 205.
 Helvetian Republic, Formation of the, 156, 197.
 Heydecooper, 136.
 Hohenlinden, 188.
 Holland, Lord, 361.
 Hortense, 211.
 Humboldt, Baron von, 304, 306, 308.
 Institut, Talleyrand's Speeches at the, 146.
 Issy, 56.
 Italian Republic, Formation of the, 190.
 Jacobins, Napoleon on the, 182.
 „ Origin of the, 87.
 Jena, The Battle of, 243.
 Jersey, Lady, 363.
 Jews, Enfranchisement of the, 88.
 Josephine, 166, 211.
 La Besnardière, 240, 300.
 Labrador, 303.
 Lacoste, The Marquis, 75.
 Lafayette, 48, 106, 121.
 Lamartine, 102.
 Lansdowne, Lord, 115, 130, 137.
 Laporte, 128.
 Latour du Pin, M, 300.
 Lauderdale, Lord, 239.
 Lauzun, 26, 30, 111.
 La Vendée, The war in, 169, 184.
 Laval, The Duchess de, 265, 267.
 Lebrun, 128, 179.
 Legendre, 139.
 Legion of Honour, Founding of the, 194.
 Legislative Body, The, 178.
 Leipzig, The Battle of, 275.
 Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, Prince, 359.
 Lessart, M. de, 111.
 Library, Sale of Talleyrand's, 130, 273.
 Lieven, The Princess, 354.
 London, Conference of, 358.
 „ Talleyrand at, 113, 133, 354-64.
 Londonderry, Lord, attacks Talleyrand, 360.
 Louis XVI, Crowning of, 17.
 „ „ Execution of, 130.
 Louis XVIII, 289, 317, 319, 322, 333, 348.

- Louis Philippe, 352, 353, 358-9, 364, 369.
 Louis, Baron, 298,
 Louisiana, 199.
 Luchesini, 224
 Lunéville, The Treaty of, 187.
 Lutzen, The Battle of, 275.
 Lytton on Talleyrand, 255, 272, 317, 333.

 Malmesbury, Lord, 156.
 Malta, 185, 224.
 Marbœuf, Mgr, 46.
 Marengo, 186.
 Maret, 156, 274, 277.
 Marie Antoinette, 26, 47, 53, 81.
 Marriage of Talleyrand, 209.
 Marseillais, The, 122.
 Martignac, 349.
 Maubreuil, Marquis de, 346.
 Maurepas, 36, 48.
 Maury, 84.
 Melzi, 190.
 Memoirs, The, of Talleyrand, 335-8.
 Meneval, 267.
 Merlin de Douai, 154.
 Metternich, 303, 306, 310.
 Michaud, 235, 286.
 „ Charges of, 161.
 Michelet, 75.
 Mignet, 350.
 Miller, Sir J. R. 88, 103.
 Miot de Melito, Charges of, 155, 161, 168.
 Mirabeau, 31, 51, 64, 86, 102.
 Mirondot, Bishop, 97.
 Monaco, The Hotel de, 265, 273.
 Monasteries, The Suppression of, 90.
 Monastic Orders before the Revolution, 22.
Moniteur, The, 89.
 „ Talleyrand's Letter to the, 95.
 Mons, Talleyrand at, 322.
 Montesson, Mme. de, 33.
 Montrond, 320, 362.
 Morality during the Revolution, 112.
 „ „ Directorate, 143.
 Morellet, The Abbé, 24.
 Morgan, Lady, 340.
Morning Post on Talleyrand, 354.
 Morris, Governor, 34, 98.
 Moscow, Napoleon's Return from, 274.
 Moulin, 171, 173.
 Murat, 244, 314.

 Napoleon, Attempt on the Life of, 188.
 „ buys Talleyrand's Hotel, 273.
 „ Crowning of, 222.
 „ Diplomatic Methods of, 187, 226.
 „ First Marriage of, 221.
 „ in Egypt, 168.
 „ King of Italy, 231.
 „ leaves Elba, 317.
 „ Second Marriage of, 271.
 „ Talleyrand's first acquaintance with, 165.
 „ Talleyrand's respect for, 178, 189.
 „ Violence of, 267.
 Narbonne, Count Louis de, 29, 131.
 National Assembly, The, 69.
 Nationalisation of Church Property, 82.
 Necker, Talleyrand's Attack on, 51.
 Nemurs, The Duc de, 357, 358.
 Nesselrode, Count, 285, 304, 306.
 Netherland Trouble, The, 355-6, 360-3.
 Noailles, The Count de, 300, 313.
 Noailles, The Vicomte de, 74, 86.
 Nobles after the Restoration, 295.
 „ The pre-Revolutionary, 26, 53.
 Noel, 125.
 Nonconformists, 103.
 Non-swearing Priests, Talleyrand protects, 110.

 Ollivier, M., 302.
 "Orange-War," The, 191.
 Ordination of Talleyrand, 39.
 Orléans, The Duc d', 64, 131.

 Palais Royal, The, 33, 63,
 Palmerston, 355, 357.
 Panchaud, 32.
 Pasquier, Charges of, 155, 161, 188, 331.
 Paul I, Death of, 192.
 Pauline, 342, 365, 369.
 Peel, Sir Robert, 365.
 Périer, Casimir, 332, 359, 361.
 Périgord, Cardinal Hélié de, 12.
 Perrey, 217, 218.
 Pétion, 121.

- Philadelphia, Talleyrand at, 135.
 Pichegru, General, 153.
 Pitt, 113.
 „ Talleyrand meets, 49.
 Piedmont, Annexation of, 224.
 Pius VII, 10, 200, 221.
 Poland, Talleyrand's Work in, 245.
 Polignac, Prince de, 349.
 Poniatowski, Princess, 247.
 Portugal, Affairs of, 191.
 Pozzo di Borgo, 43, 328.
 Pradt, Archbishop de, 288.
 Press, Talleyrand defends Liberty of the, 345.
 Provincial Assemblies, 54.
 Prussia, Alliance of, with Russia, 22.
 „ declares War on France, 243.
 Pultusk, The Battle of, 224.
- Quelen, Mgr., 366.
- Rastadt, Congress of, 156.
 Reinhard, 117, 142.
 Rémusat, Mme., 149, 212.
 Renan, 108.
 Renaudes, The Abbé des, 45, 58.
 Reveillère, 149.
 Revolution, Causes of the, 49, 53, 109.
 Revolution, Paris during the, 111.
 Revolution of 1830, The, 351.
 Rewbell, 149, 152.
 Rheims, The Archbishop of, 7, 11.
 Rhine Confederation, The, 237, 240.
 Richelieu, The Duc de, 328, 333.
 Rights of Man, Declaration of, 76, 78.
 Robespierre, 109.
 Roche-Aymon, Archbishop de la, 11, 20.
 Rochecotte, 343.
 Rochefoucauld, The Cardinal de la, 65, 67.
 Rochefoucauld, The Duc de la, 121, 140.
 Roederer, 277.
 Roger-Ducos, 171, 173.
 Rohan, The Cardinal de, 8, 28.
 Roman Republic, Formation of the, 156.
 Rose, Mr. Holland, on Talleyrand, 191, 201, 203, 215.
 Rousseau, 235.
 Roux, 161, 162.
- Royal Lottery, Proposal to buy up the, 42.
 Royer-Collard, 342, 365.
- St. Denis, Talleyrand's *abbaye* of, 18, 23.
 St. Domingo, 199.
 St. Florentin, The Hotel, 273.
 St. Julien, Count, 186.
 Saint Sulpice, 10.
 Sainte-Beuve on Talleyrand, 13, 45, 60, 102, 161.
 Sand, George, on Talleyrand, 364.
 Savary, 217, 273, 276, 284, 285.
 Saxony, The partition of, 310, 312.
 Schwartzenberg, Prince, 286.
 Sebastiani, 225, 357, 360.
 Secularization of Talleyrand, 207.
 Sémonville, 214.
 Senate, The, 178.
 Senfft on Talleyrand, 163, 241, 250.
 September massacres, The, 125.
 Sieyès, 65, 69, 73, 158, 160, 171, 172, 179.
 Simon, Jules, 108.
 Sloane, Professor, 18, 161.
 Smith, Sidney, 132.
 Société du Manège, The, 170, 175.
 Sorbonne, Talleyrand at the, 14, 24-5.
 Souza, The Marquis de, 142.
 Spain, Napoleon's Expedition to, 252-6.
 Spanish Princes, The, at Valençay, 256, 278.
 Spina, Mgr., 202.
 Staël, Mme. de, 62, 111, 131, 146.
 Stapfer, 192, 196.
 States-general, The, 65, 79.
 Strassburg, Napoleon's fit at, 231.
 Stuart, Sir Ch., 300.
- Talleyrand, Archbishop, 10, 39, 54, 283.
 Talleyrand-Périgord, C. M. de:—
 „ Ancestry of, 1.
 „ as Agent-General, 39, 46.
 „ Birth of, 2, 140.
 „ Bishopric of, 54.
 „ Consecration of, 56.
 „ Constitutional Ideal of, 60, 72.
 „ Death of, 370.
 „ Education of, 5-14.
 „ Energy of, 4, 230.

- Talleyrand-Périgord, C. M. de :—
 " Expelled from England, 133.
 " Feeling of towards Napoleon, 178, 189.
 " in America, 135-40.
 " Marriage of, 209.
 " Morality of, 36, 371.
 " Ordination of, 39.
 " Parents of, 2, 140.
 " Person of, 28, 340, 371.
 " President of the National Assembly, 89.
 " Reconciliation of, 366.
 " Religious Views of, 201, 366.
 " Resignation under Napoleon, 250.
 " Secularised, 207.
 " Suspension of, 99.
 " Venality of, 157-63, 195-8, 315.
 " Wit of, 35, 213, 294, 328, 344, 348.
 Talleyrand-Perigord, Lt. de, 3, 6, 55.
 Talleyrand, The Princess, 212, 341.
 Tallien, Mme., 149.
 Target, 68.
 Tennis Court, Oath in the, 70.
 Theophilanthropists, The, 151, 202.
 Thiers, 350.
 Thirty Club, The, 62.
 Tilsit, The Conference at, 247.
 Tithe, Surrender of, 77.
 Toleration, Talleyrand's Spirit of, 103.
 Tour et Taxis, The Princess de la, 261.
 Toussaint l'Ouverture, 199.
 Trafalgar, 233.
 Tribunate, The, 178.
 Trinidad, 191, 193.
 Tuileries, Attack on the, 122.
 " Napoleon at the, 180.
 Turgot, 48, 50.
 Tuscany, Talleyrand seeks to go to, 130.
 Tyskiewitz, Countess, 247, 266, 363.
 Ulm, Battle of, 232.
 Universal Suffrage under Napoleon, 178.
 Valençay, 256, 278, 342, 364.
 " The Spanish Princes at, 256, 278.
 Varennes, Flight to, 104.
 Vars, The Baron de, 36.
 Venality of Talleyrand, 157-63.
 Vercelli, The Bishop of, 201.
 Versailles, Court life at, 226.
 Veto, The right of, 79.
 Vice-grand Electorship. The, 250.
 Vienna, Congress of, 303.
 Vienne, The Archbishop of, 67, 69.
 Vitrolles, Baron, 283.
 Voltaire's last visit to Paris, 35.
 Walewski, The Countess, 245.
 Warsaw, Talleyrand at, 245.
 Waterloo, 322.
 Wealth of the French Clergy, 21, 42, 83.
 Weimar, Napoleon at, 264.
 Wellington, 297, 314, 324, 327, 331, 360.
 Whitworth, Lord, 225.
 Wieland, 264.
 Yarmouth, Lord, 237, 239.





